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THE SOCIETY OF HOUSING MANAGERS  
AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN HOUSING

VOL. I.

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The City University

Department of Social Sciences

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## ABSTRACT

The Society of Housing Managers, formed from the women trained by Octavia Hill, is not well known, though it played a prominent part in housing management from the 1930s onwards.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the hypothesis that the Society of Housing Managers played a substantial role in encouraging the employment of trained women in housing from 1912 to the post-war period. It is further suggested that the ending of an all female Society and its subsequent amalgamation with the Institute of Housing in 1965 was one factor in weakening the position of women in housing employment, although other factors contributed.

A major source of evidence used is depth interviews carried out with members of the committee who dealt with unification between the Society and the Institute, as well as interviews with other women managers. Some of these informants supplied early, often unique, documents. The Minute Books of the Society and other records not hitherto documented were also important as were Public Record Office papers, contemporary journals and secondary historical sources.

Statistical data centres around a detailed analysis by gender of the Institute of Housing membership records and two major surveys carried out by the City University and the NFHA: using unpublished as well as the published data. An additional small survey was done of women's employment in allied professional organisations.

It is concluded that the Society of Housing Managers played a crucial role in drawing women into housing employment in the 1930s and thus opened up opportunities for women in the expansion of public housing during the second world war and after. However some disadvantages may have been incurred by separate organisation. In comparison, women in the 1980s have had some success in combining separate women's networks with membership of a mixed Institute.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	Association of Municipal Authorities
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AWHPM	Association of Women House Property Mangers
BBC	British Broadcasing Corporation
CHAC	Central Housing Advisory Committee
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
COS	Charity Orgnisation Society
GLC	Greater London Council
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commmission
HERA	Housing Employment Register and Advice
HMEB	Housing Management Examination Board
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
ICA	Institute of Chartered Accountants
IHA	Institute of Housing Administration
ILO	International Labour Office
LCC	London County Council
LGTB	Local Government Training Board
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
NALGO	National Association of Local Government Officers
NCC	National Consumer Council
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties

NCW	National Council of Women
NFHA	National Federation of Housing Associations
NHTPC	National Housing and Town Planning Council
PRO	Public Record Office
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SHM	Society of Housing Managers
SWHEM	Society of Women Housing Estate Managers
SWHM	Society Of Women Housing Managers
UK	United Kingdom



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PAGE 1

## CHAPTER 1

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

Octavia Hill, who worked in the latter half of the nineteenth century is mentioned by most of the historians of housing reform or of public and social housing. Her work on the management of rented housing and her introduction of women to this work is reasonably well known, although there is considerable controversy about the nature of her influence. After her death groups of women trained by her continued to work, and train others, and in 1932 formed the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers (later to become the Society of Housing Managers). This Society actively campaigned for the employment of women in housing, provided a system of training and qualifications and was regarded by Central Government as an authoritative body on housing management matters, together with the Institute of Housing (which had predominantly male members). Yet it is very infrequently mentioned in any of the histories of public housing. The Society continued as an all female organisation until 1948 when, after much discussion, the admission of men was agreed. However the Society failed to benefit from the post-war expansion in housing employment and the Institute of Housing acquired a larger membership. A number of factors led to the unification of the two bodies in 1965.

The original starting point for this study was the fact that by the late 1970s there were very few women left in senior positions in the Institute of Housing. An early

study (Brion and Tinker 1980) looked at this position compared with the earlier participation by women and began to identify some possible reasons for the decline in women's influence. However, the study indicated that in many ways the surprising fact was not that women's influence had declined, but that it had been there in the first place. It seemed likely that the Society of Housing Managers (originally an all female society) might have played an important part in introducing women into this role, but hardly anything was known about its history or the way it had operated. It seemed worthwhile and interesting therefore to explore the possible links between the Society of Housing Managers and women's employment in housing.

The aim of this study is to describe the development of the Society, the type of work done by its members and in particular the role of the Society in encouraging the employment of trained women in housing. The hypothesis is that the Society of Housing Managers played a substantial role in assisting the employment of women in housing from 1912 to 1965. It is further suggested that the ending of an all women Society and its subsequent amalgamation with the Institute of Housing was one factor in weakening the position of women in housing employment although other factors contributed to a decline in their position.

## 1.2 DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE ENQUIRY

The closing stages of this study look at events after the unification of the Society and the Institute in 1965. To

understand the development of the Society of Housing Managers it was necessary to look briefly at the work of Octavia Hill. The period covered by the study is therefore broadly from the 1870s to 1980s, over a hundred years, so inevitably it has a strong historical element. As Cohen and Manion (1985) state, historical subjects inevitably produce acute problems in defining the area of enquiry, since each topic has many related or contingent areas which seem worth exploring. There were such contingent areas for this study and the long period which the study covered increased the need to define and limit the contingent areas.

Since the central hypothesis concerned the Society's role in encouraging women's employment in housing, it was necessary, for each chronological period, briefly to look at what was happening in housing policy and administration. For policy issues and housebuilding this was not too difficult as these areas are now adequately chronicled in secondary sources e.g. Burnett (1986), Holmans (1987). The exception is the war period where most sources seem to rely on Titmuss (1950). Recourse was made to the Public Record Office for this period but, though useful material was found, much of it seemed to be what had already been used by Titmuss. However, it did provide expansion and explanation of some of the statements in Titmuss. This extra investigation allowed many of the comments interviewees had made about working during the wartime period to be put properly into context.

These problems about the wartime period illustrate a common difficulty found in this study. Although the history of housing policy and construction has by now been explored by a number of writers, the history of housing administration has been given far less attention and for some periods (like the war) is virtually non-existent. The only book which now deals with the history of housing management (Power, 1987) was not available until the very end of the study, but the historical account in Power is brief and has a particular focus. The attempt was made in this study to piece together sufficient background material from both secondary and primary sources to provide a context for the thesis, but strict limits had to be placed on this. There was found to be a dearth of accurate and representative studies of the practice of housing management and administration and its effects on tenants and consumers. This affects evaluation of the Society's contribution to housing and is discussed in Chapters Four, Nine and the Conclusions.

The other major contingent area was feminism. Here basic secondary sources were available dealing with the chronological development of feminism and these have been used at appropriate stages. In considering the crucial period of the development of the Society in the 1920s and 1930s it was clear that the Society had extensive links with other women's campaigning organisations at the time. These have been noted as they appear in the Society's records but not pursued as this would have extended the area of the study unduly. Similarly it was clear that there was a wider women's movement interest in housing at the time: again this has been noted but not explored per

se. On the whole the contingent area of feminism produced less problems for the research than the area of housing administration.

### Theoretical Perspectives

This thesis does not take one particular theory and attempt to explore it throughout the length of the argument. Rather it examines particular fields of theory which are felt to be useful at different stages in the narrative to provide explanations for the events and tests them to see how well they fit with the data. The theoretical fields called on in this way include sociology and economics but mainly originate from feminism and from social psychology. In particular, theories of gender role stereotyping and of group dynamics are found to be of help and the relevant references are given at appropriate stages in the discussion.

#### 1.3 LOCATION OF RECORDS AND OVERVIEW OF DATA USED

It was clear that most of the study was historical and therefore identifying suitable records and sources of data was crucial. At the time when the exploratory stages of this study began (1978) very little was known about the location of any records of the Society of Housing Managers. The then Institute of Housing had not taken any particular note of these records and indeed when the researcher first enquired nothing was known of them by the Institute staff contacted. The ex-deputy Secretary of the Institute (Marjorie Cleaver), who by then was working at the Housing Centre Trust, mentioned

that the bound volumes of the Society minutes had been stored in the basement of Victoria House and from her description it was possible to locate these with the help of Institute staff. The Institute did have copies of the Institute of Housing journals and year books but mainly had post-war material. There appeared to be no early copies of Institute of Housing minutes. The Institute had few of the older Society of Housing Managers' journals or annual reports (see Appendices).

The Fawcett Library, fortunately, had a reasonable collection of Society publications, though by no means a complete one. The British Library Index contained few references to the Society of Housing Managers, though clearly it was a good source for general housing material. The Public Record Office provided a good source of data for those periods when housing management had been the subject of official committees and for some aspects of the war period. But this dealt with only a very limited area.

Given the limitations of these published sources it was hoped that private ones would be more fruitful. An initial set of quite lengthy interviews had been carried out with the members of the committee which dealt with unification of the Society and the Institute in 1980. Some of this material had been used for and published in "Women in Housing" (Brion and Tinker, 1980). But as this study was quite brief the data had by no means been fully used. It was decided to analyse this data more extensively but also to interview other key figures within the Society (as defined by the interviewees) and

follow up on leads to other sources of information which had emerged from the interviews.

So, besides carrying out the interviews the researcher checked to see whether the interviewees were in possession of any extra documentary sources. From the first few interviews it appeared that many of the older women housing managers had moved a number of times and had been very unsentimental about throwing out earlier impedimenta. It was hoped that the law of averages would produce one or two interviewees who had been less brisk about clearing out. Fortunately, Miss Janet Upcott, who by then was in her eighties, had moved rather less and had kept more material from the earlier Society which was very important to her. By the time this study was written, she very kindly donated to the researcher her collection of Society of Housing Managers annual reports and journals, some material relating to the Octavia Hill club and some miscellaneous records including photographs of herself and her team and of housing staff working for the Ministry of Munitions at the end of the First World War (see Appendix 1). This collection is unique.

A few other interviewees were also able to contribute significant publications and papers. In this way a substantial body of written records on the Society had been identified and this often itself provided the clue to journal articles and other publications which might be of interest.

As this material was worked through it needed to be



related to a number of secondary sources. General social histories. histories of primary sources in housing. histories of the women's movement were all used at various stages (see References and Bibliography).

In exploring the fate of women inside the Institute extensive use was made of published and unpublished Institute of Housing data which had not been statistically analysed before (see Chapter Eight). Material from the Municipal Journal was also used in this way. Finally, for the most recent period, two major surveys were used: the Housing Staff survey carried out by the Housing Research Project at The City University, of which the author had been a member, and the National Federation of Housing Associations' Women in Housing survey (the author had been a member of the Women in Housing working party which steered this through). In both cases, reference needed to be made to the primary data to obtain particular tabulations or information for this study.

#### 1.4 METHOD OF ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN RECORDS

##### Society of Housing Managers' Minutes. Annual Reports and Journal

By far the largest task in relation to records was the analysis of the Society of Housing Managers' own records. There were six very large bound volumes of minutes of meetings, consisting of typewritten pages pasted in, covering the periods 1933 to 1961. These volumes were skimmed through to get an overall view. Then the minutes were read and items which seemed likely to be of interest were card indexed and synopses of events were also

created. There were two indexes, one of people and the other of organisations and issues. The Quarterly Bulletins and annual reports were used in the same way, though the material from Quarterly Bulletins tended to be best for description and the annual reports for statistics. This analysis was a major task because of the volume of data. The Institute of Housing records were examined generally in less detail but in more detail over periods when issues such as amalgamation were being considered.

Membership records of the Institute of Housing were analysed to provide the breakdown of male and female Fellows. Members and students in 1965, 1977 and 1983. This had to be done manually and was very time consuming because the Institute itself did not, even in 1985, break down its membership by gender. That practice has now been introduced following pressure from the Institute of Housing Women's working party (see Chapter Ten).

#### Validity and reliability of the data

The minutes of the Society are signed and dated and there is no reason to doubt their authenticity. The minutes of the Society were written for a semi-public readership, i.e. they were intended to be read only by members of the committee concerned but those who were writing them would be aware that they were creating a public record that could and would be referred to by others. It is reasonable to assume therefore that they present somewhat of a "public face". However, because they record decisions and areas of discussion, and sometimes letters are attached, it is often possible to get information

about disputes and discussions going on within the Society and also in some instances the degree of feeling and the extent of differences involved. This is particularly the case, for example, with amalgamation with the Institute, where discussions and reports of various branches were included. Where the minutes are dealing with issues such as the financial problems of the Society, the numbers of students, training placements, or negotiations for a combined examination one would expect a reasonably accurate record albeit couched in discreet language. Reports of members' influence on and meetings with other organisations, for example the Ministry of Housing and the Institute of Housing, are necessarily one sided but it is often possible to check these against the other reports of the same meetings or issue.

Articles from the Quarterly Bulletins, annual reports or other journals quite clearly present a public view of the Society and must be considered as such. These are often useful for identifying both the official views of the Society and the degrees of debate in its ranks. Letters in the Quarterly Bulletin, for example over amalgamation, often reflect the strength of feeling involved. There were occasions where relevant factual data was not available from the minutes or their interpretation was uncertain and here the data from the annual reports, though more sparse, was invaluable.

Similar observations can be applied to the equivalent material from the Institute of Housing.

## 1.5 THE INTERVIEWS

### 1.5.1 Choice of Interviewees and Achieved Sample

#### Members of the Standing Joint Committee dealing with Unification

Because members of the Committee which dealt with unification had been of some standing in the Society and as this was a fairly close knit occupational group it was possible gradually to trace their whereabouts, though a number had lost active contact with housing. In tracing the ex-Society members, many of whom had left housing earlier, the social contacts formed by the Society were helpful. The ex-Secretary of the Society, Marjorie Cleaver, had compiled an address list for a social gathering the previous year, which proved invaluable.

The names of the Committee members and the achieved interviews are given in Appendix 3. It can be seen that where interviews were not achieved it was because of the death or serious illness of the member, except in one case where the person concerned felt that his memory was too poor for an interview but did give some comments over the telephone (which in fact proved very helpful).

Nevertheless, the impact of male mortality meant that fewer of the Institute members survived to be interviewed so this would mean that the achieved interviews are weighted towards the Society.

Where the thesis is dealing with the history of the Society, the imbalance in the interviews is not a serious factor: it was mainly in relation to unification and its effects that it was felt essential to have an Institute

perspective. It was fortunate that two very influential Institute members, C. V. Baker and J. P. Macey, had survived and had detailed recollections of the relevant events, and others gave very vivid comments.

### Key Figures

A list of key figures was made from early interviews and this was added to as the interviews progressed. Priority was given to those mentioned by more than one person.

#### 1.5.2 Achieving the Interviews

The author was aware that people who had been senior officers in housing organisations often tended to be very cautious in making statements to the press or writers. This is often because they feel that statements have been misreported in the past, or that the difficulties under which housing organisations were working have been insufficiently appreciated.

Also elderly people are often wary of being approached by strangers and may also be prey to doubts about their ability to remember long off events. Some also were doubtful that what they had to say would be of interest. It had been anticipated that the approach to these interviewees would, therefore, need to be carefully made and some thought was given to the drafting of the initial letter (Appendices 6 & 7). The letter was usually followed up by a telephone conversation which often involved extended discussion of the aims and methods of the study. It seemed likely that the author's earlier membership of the Society of Housing Managers provided increased acceptability with some interviewees and there

was also evidence of personal checks being made by interviewees through the 'network' about the bona fides of this research.

Eventually face to face interviews were achieved with nearly all the people of whom interviews were requested and 29 interviews in all were carried out, plus two telephone interviews and one postal completion by extended letter. Although a number of interviewees were gathered in the home counties, achieving the interviews involved travel to East Anglia, the Midlands and York, and overnight stays, usually with the interviewee. The author is therefore very grateful to all those who gave their time in this way.

#### 1.5.3 The Interview Method

The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format, using a prompt sheet which, if interviewees wanted, was sent to them in advance (Appendix 7). The sequence of questions had been worked out with the earliest interviews and it had been found that reviewing the interviewee's career, even though it might not all be relevant, tended to bring out interesting aspects about the Society not always reached by direct questioning. It is the author's impression that in fact the interviews where subjects had not had the prompt sheet beforehand tended to flow best, though most subjects had obviously been reviewing their involvement with the Society and looking for relevant papers and publications if they had any. Because of the age and nature of the interviewees, a very flexible attitude was adopted to the schedule and

issues pursued when they arose in the course of the interview. The author's previous experience with fairly lengthy semi-structured interviews proved helpful here.

All the interviews were tape recorded where possible and there was only one case where the interviewee felt that this would be too off putting. The issue was not pressed if the interviewee was unwilling.

Most interviews lasted at least an hour and a half and often more, especially where the visit was a lengthy one. In view of the age of many of the interviewees the interview was divided into stages with suitable breaks, or the overall length was curtailed if it was likely to impose a strain on the interviewee. It must be stressed that the latter was only in a minority of cases as most of the interviewees seemed to have remained very fit. Brief notes were also taken during the interview both to aid memory and in case there was any problem with the recording.

As a number of interviewees lived out of London they were often generous enough to provide the author with a meal, or even overnight accommodation. This gave more time to space out the interview and sometimes resulted in additional material being given "off the record".

#### 1.5.4 Analysis of the Interviews

Advice on qualitative methodology stresses how important it is to make the methods of analysis as consistent as possible (e.g. Hornville, Jowell et al, 1978: 23-25).

In the case of lengthy semi-structured interviews, tape recording and transcription is often advised and the author had concluded from previous experience that this would be the best method. The interviews were therefore transcribed, some by the author and some by an assistant; these had to be checked for places where the tape was indistinct or only made sense to someone with detailed knowledge of the subject.

The transcripts were filed with the interview notes and any additional synopses (for example, often a synopsis was made of the person's career if this had not already been done in the notes). Once all the interviews with committee members had been completed these were read through in a fairly open way. By this stage certain major themes related to the thesis had begun to emerge and the transcripts were analysed and coded using a card index and colour coding on the transcripts. This was the major way in which material from the interviews was used for the writing. However, as the writing progressed, if other themes, issues or facts emerged, the interview material was searched again for relevant data. Not every transcript needed to be searched each time. As familiarity with the material grew it was clear, for example, that only certain interviewees had been working or involved with the Society in the 1930s while others would be suitable sources of information for events after 1965, or for the Institute's viewpoint. This helped to reduce the formidable task of finding the relevant data. Inevitably also some interviewees were more vivid or more detailed in their descriptions than others. The card



analysis, mentioned earlier, helped to reduce the bias which might have occurred by undue reliance on the more colourful quotations as the effort was made to represent what seemed to be common views.

On occasions the function of the interviews is to provide the more personal view which helps to illustrate and illuminate the more prosaic written records and statistical data. On the other hand, the interviews also had an important underlying function in pointing up what seemed important to people and providing fruitful interaction with the written records, with each casting light upon the other.

#### 1.5.5 Discussion of the Interview Method

Over the past 25 years, qualitative methodology and oral history have emerged from past neglect to greater acceptance as methods of research (Editorial, History Workshop 1979; Samuel 1980; Hornville, Jowell et al 1978). Like all such methods they have both advantages and disadvantages and at all stages one must be aware of the fragile nature of 'the truth'.

#### Depth Interviewing

It is well known that in any interview the interviewer can impart bias and this is held to be particularly the case in semi-structured interviewing (Moser & Kalton, 1971: 281). However, the author is of the opinion that, as the choice of questions in itself is an expression of the researcher's bias, there is not necessarily any greater loss of veracity in a semi-structured interview, where the interviewee can answer on their own terms and

in their own words, than there is in squeezing responses into the format of the self completion questionnaire or highly structured interview. Care was taken to phrase the questions in as neutral a way as possible and to keep the interviewer statements and questions to a minimum, with a concentration on active listening. (See, for example, Banaka (1971): Smith (1975) for a discussion of the skills required in depth interviewing.)

There is considerable controversy as to whether taking notes or tape recording can inhibit an interviewee. It has already been noted that it was anticipated that some of these interviewees would be cautious in their statements and this was the case. The author did not feel that taking notes, which was largely expected by the interviewees, had much additional inhibiting effect and indeed it can serve to reassure interviewees that consideration is being given to what they are saying, or in providing a summary of the last topic discussed.

With interviews of such length and complexity it was felt advisable to tape record, but there was some doubt as to whether this would inhibit the interviewees. In fact some did express doubts but were reassured once issues of confidentiality had been discussed. Advocates of tape recording usually argue that interviewees lose their consciousness of the tape recorder once the interview progresses. This usually seemed to be the case. But the author did feel that sometimes the need to set up and check the functioning of the tape recorder could add to the interviewee's nervousness at the beginning of the

interview and had to be handled very carefully.

It was noticed in one or two cases that interviewees became more forthcoming when the tape recorder was switched off so it could be concluded that in these cases the subject had been aware of it. However the interviewer was also asked on occasion "not to write this down" when a particular comment was made. She concluded that the inhibiting factor was the consciousness of being interviewed for record and that this occurred whatever recording method was used. From the comments made, the main concern of interviewees was that their words would not be misrepresented or used to reflect badly on other individuals - or to some extent the Society. It was difficult to know how to handle the information which had been given "off the record". In general it went towards forming the overall view and often reinforced what another person had said more openly.

### The Confidentiality Issue

Many oral history interviews are carried out with working-class people and their confidentiality is often respected by grouping according to type. However, the interviewees for this study were identifiable. Many of the interviews for this study were carried out with an elite group where the interview might be of interest for public record and possibly the effort should be made to obtain clearance of the interviews for archive use, since some of the historical material gained would be irreplaceable. But it was clear that very often the interviews would only be given if there was assurance of personal confidentiality and the whole project would be

non-viable if this was not done. So the issue was discussed with interviewees and they were assured that the material would be used in such a way that individuals would not be identified. On one or two occasions, this confidentiality affected how material was used since the use of a certain sequence of quotations would have made an interviewee identifiable. It also meant that it was not even possible to attribute quotations to "interviewee A", "B" etc since knowledge of careers and positions held would have made people identifiable. Two interviewees had cleared their material more generally for publication and in any other cases where the source is identifiable this was specifically cleared. Care was taken to use the interview data fully in this study so that the results would be available to other researchers.

Respecting the confidentiality requirements of these interviewees therefore means that the reader is not able to assess which respondents' views are being used but has not otherwise influenced the use of the material in the thesis. It does bequeath the problem of the future use and storage of the taped material and present plans include the possibility of identifying those records which appear to be of most historical interest and seeing if the interviewees or their executors will release the originals or edited versions for public record and storage in some suitable location, possibly in conjunction with some of the documentary material about the Society which has been accumulated.

#### 1.5.6 Uses and Limitations of the Interviews as a Data Source

The final question which needs to be considered in relation to the interview data is how useful is information from interviews about the respondent's past experiences as opposed to information on present experiences or feelings. The interviews asked respondents to look back to events that happened twenty, thirty or more years ago and human memory is known to be fallible. However, it is known that events with emotional significance are more vividly recalled (Rose, 1985: 63) so the use of the interviews as a way of illustrating what people felt at the time is valid. In some instances interviews were used as sources of factual material which was not well covered in the literature. This was particularly the case in the interviews with Miss Upcott, for example. Then over 80, she was one surviving link with the managers who had worked with Octavia Hill. She was able to cast light on the events between Octavia Hill's death and 1932 which were only covered briefly and in a fragmentary way in the literature. Where Miss Upcott's account was checked against written records its accuracy was borne out - when she was uncertain about dates she said so. From her accounts it was then possible to make better sense of the written records available, because they provided a framework into which the often fragmentary records could be fitted.

The issue of using interviews as a source of information about past experiences is essentially a question about the oral history method and is extensively addressed in

that literature, although the main use of oral history has been in the context of socialist and working-class historical research.

In the course of a controversy in the early 1980s, Samuel gave a retrospective account of the History Workshop's methods and "The central place which History Workshop has often given to 'real life experience' both as a subject for historical inquiry, and as a litmus-paper to test the abstract against the particular...." (Samuel, 1980: 165) He traced the desire to use such methods to roots as diverse as a reaction against some of the conventions of academic history and the rise of the women's movement and Marxist theory. He argues that the problems of reconstructing and interpreting the past are common to the use both of oral and of written sources.

"We are continually aware, in our work, of the silences of the record: while in writing we know how the addition of a single word can transform the thrust of a sentence. No historian can doubt the fragility of the construction of historical knowledge, or be unaware of the filters and selectivities which intervene between the original document and the reproduction of some fragment of it in the pages of a finished work." (Samuel, 1980: 175)

An earlier editorial in History Workshop had discussed the way in which oral history methods were being used to tackle other historical and political questions. The difficulties of using the data in this way, it is argued, are not simply those of the problems of individual memory and the fact that personal experience is often remembered more vividly than political facts.

"To express the problem of memory in this way, however, is to oversimplify it, and to reduce the task of the historian to one of straightforward identification and recording of 'facts' without interpretation or analysis or relationship with the person remembering...." (Editorial, History

Workshop. 1979: (ii))

The article argues that recognition of the many layers of experience and through which such memories are filtered is in itself an important part of the central phenomenon of human consciousness. This line of thought is taken further in a review discussion in 1985 when Ronald Fraser's chronicle combining oral history sources and the insights gained through psychoanalysis is discussed (History Workshop Group, 1985: 175). This recognition of the personal and subjective elements is relevant to one of the central themes of this thesis. For example, the exploration of why women's participation in the Institute dropped after 1965 is one place where exploring the subjective experience of the interviewees was particularly useful. But social psychological theory has also been used to explain what was said and unsaid in this context as well.

Portelli (1981: 103) argues that written and oral sources are not exclusive but the specific qualities of oral sources should be recognised.

"Oral sources are not objective. This of course applies to every source, although the holiness of writing sometimes leads us to forget it. But the inherent non-objectivity of oral sources lies in specific intrinsic characteristics, the most important being that they are artificial, variable, partial."

He argues that they are artificial because they are not spontaneous but stimulated by the researcher, variable because oral testimony will never be the same twice, and partial in the sense of being unfinished as it is impossible to exhaust the entire historical memory of a single informant. He also stresses the researcher's or historian's role in controlling the whole discourse.

In the present case it was not possible to do as Portelli suggests and interview more than once. On the other hand the subject matter was a group as well as an individual experience and by interviewing a number of different members of the group it was possible to relate and compare different accounts. Portelli argues that

"The first thing that makes oral history different, therefore, is that it tells us less about events as such than about their meaning. This does not imply that oral history has no factual interest; interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events...." (Portelli, 1981: 99)

Oral history techniques have most frequently been used in the history of non-ruling class groups excluded from the power elite such as women. The Society of Housing Managers can be seen as an elite group. Dubois (1980) regards the study of such elite women's groups as a rather rudimentary stage in feminist history and she is not alone in this. However, even such a middle class group were disadvantaged in relation to the power elite. The reason why different approaches have often been used to investigate women's history is because the record of their achievement has often been submerged: the author felt that this is what had happened to the Society of Housing Managers and the way in which the historical records were poorly preserved, which was referred to at the beginning of this study, would tend to bear out this argument.

#### 1.6 BALANCE AND BIAS IN THE SOURCES, METHODS AND PRESENTATION OVERALL

Given that the aim of the thesis was to explore the role of the Society of Housing Managers it is not surprising that the majority of informants were members of that Society. For matters internal to the Society this is not



usually a serious issue but it clearly is of more importance when matters like the influence of the Society are being discussed and here efforts have been made to seek external sources of information and statistical data. Given also that the author was herself at one time a member of the Society this might be felt also to impart a degree of bias but the interest of the study was in weighing up whether in the long term the existence of the Society has been of benefit to women's employment in housing or not and there was sufficient distance of time to make this more objective. Because of the nature of the sources, particular efforts were made to follow up references, either in the contemporary sources or in the secondary literature, which were critical of the Society's approach, since bias can be expressed in the selection of source material.

Drake argues that social scientists often regard historical studies as operating in an area of scarce resources. "Historical data are seen as unique items which have survived the passage of time, the fact of their survival bearing no obvious relationship to their value." (Drake, 1973: 2) Drake argues that there are in fact among past records quite large caches of data of interest to the social scientist and that scarcity is rather a myth. The author's experience of the historical aspects of the present study to some extent bears out and to some extent refutes Drake's argument. On many aspects there were "caches" of data that could be explored, some being more difficult of access than others. But the limitations imposed on historical enquiry by the survival

or otherwise of records were also evident. Two examples will suffice. Events between the death of Octavia Hill and the formation of the Society of Housing Managers were only very briefly covered in existing secondary sources (mainly two lines in an earlier pamphlet by Miss Upcott). A few pamphlets of this period were received from Miss Upcott, which made it clear that there were others in circulation, and one or two were found in the Fawcett Library and the British Library. There seems little chance that further material will come to light and some of the material used for this present study might well otherwise have been lost. This would certainly be the case with some of the oral testimony, where interviewees were often in their 70s or 80s by the time the study took place.

Secondly, at a broader level, the weeding of records in the Public Record Office clearly affects many fields of study. In this case it means that only a restricted number of records related to the war period remain in this central collection at PRO, and these seem largely to be those used by Titmuss (1950). Anyone wanting more specific information about housing during the war would need to explore local sources, where it is quite possible that such material still remains, but this is likely to yield a more fragmentary picture than central government papers.

Thus, in the earlier periods dealt with in this study issues to do with the scarcity of historical material are relevant at least with regard to some particular topics. However in the later periods, and for some of the

contingent areas, there is both a mass of data and an array of secondary sources and theoretical interpretations (for example, in dealing with issues regarding women's employment and women's role, or the broader aspects of housing history).

This study therefore used interviews, written records and questionnaire survey material, as well as secondary data. The use of two or more approaches may be of substantial benefit to the study. Cohen and Manion discuss this process in respect to research methods, calling the process triangulation. "Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour." (Cohen and Manion, 1980: 208)

At the data collection and interpretation level the process of triangulation is particularly useful for the historical data and has been used when sufficient sources were available. The fact that different sets of data point to similar conclusions gives one more confidence in the interpretation, though one must be aware that, particularly when causation is discussed, what is being produced is a "best fit" between the theories so far available and the data so far available. Similarly where different theoretical interpretations are applied to the same body of data, as is particularly the case in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, it is reassuring to find that these theories are not fundamentally in conflict, but can be viewed as different levels or types of interpretation of the same events.

The use of two different data collection methods need not in itself indicate a multi disciplinary approach - sociological enquiry, for example, will often use both qualitative and quantitative methods. This thesis draws its theoretical approaches from a number of different disciplines. Many philosophers argue that traditional disciplines or discourses have developed substantially different ways of thinking. For example, Pring defines these as differences in concepts that organise experience, the way in which a statement is thought to be true or false, techniques and methods of setting about an enquiry, and range of problems tackled. (Pring, 1978: 21) Different philosophers have different classifications (for example, Hirst (1965) has seven forms of knowledge but Phenix (1964) has six, but most do differentiate history from social sciences as do many of the historians quoted earlier. In addition, even within the social sciences, sociology, psychology and economics, all tend to have differing predominant ways of thinking about problems, yet all of them are drawn on from time to time in this thesis. Drawing approaches from different subjects, disciplines or discourses does cause extra methodical or conceptual work. But the writer would argue that it is very rewarding in terms of interpreting the real world.

The historical content influenced the approach of this study as well as the amount of data available. Erikson (1973) provides a particularly useful discussion of the relationship between sociology and the historical perspective from the point of view of one who "spent a

period of several years working with historical records, even though I was involved in a project that seemed eminently 'sociological' at the time." (Erikson, 1973: 13) While he queries some of the distinctions which have traditionally been made between sociologists and historians or between sociological and historical method he argues that there are some differences in the way in which they approach the interpretation of data which can helpfully be borne in mind by those who work on the borderline between the two. While most of his argument is relevant it is particularly apposite to note that "Historians are aware that their own minds are the spheres in which the past comes alive again and that the data of their researches are converted into 'histories' by a process involving personal qualities of insight, sympathy and imagination..." "When a historian reviews the available data and draws new conclusions from them, for instance, the work he published is likely to be called an 'interpretation' - suggesting both that the intellectual posture of the author is an important feature in his work and that the work itself is apt to be replaced in time by another interpretation." (Erikson, 1973: 24)

"Historians are likely to feel that a given outcome is explained if they can relate a credible story about the sequence of events that led up to it or the motives that impelled it, while sociologists are likely to feel that an outcome is explained if they can trace its connection to other institutions and forces in the surrounding environment..." (Erikson, 1973: 24)

It is argued that the location of this particular study on the borderline of historical and sociological fields gives validity to the fact that different approaches are used at different stages - close attention is given to

the sequence of events and the motives that impelled them but broader sociological forces are also distinguished where relevant. Some of the data is inappropriate for quantitative analysis, but where quantitative analysis is appropriate it has been carried out. Where the historical survival or access to records affects such analysis this issue has been explored.

Awareness of the extent to which the researcher's own perceptions and experience are part of the research process was initially seen as being best expressed by the historical writers quoted earlier. But it is also now being better expressed with regard to social research methods (see, for example, Brenner, Marsh and Brenner, 1978). This perception was particularly valuable in a study where the researcher was aware of her own lengthy involvement with both the subject under study and individuals and organisations concerned. Care was taken to be as objective as possible in the selection of data, methods of research and theoretical interpretations; the knowledge that these were all construed within a particular social context by a particular individual was an essential part of the research approach.

## 1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In general the thesis is structured as a narrative centered around the origins and activity of the Society of Housing Managers. Because of the importance of the contingent areas noted earlier, it is necessary, for the periods 1912 onwards, to include a description of the background events in housing policy and administration.

In the later chapters, background material relating to women's employment and sex role stereotyping is also examined. In some cases therefore the material was too complex to be covered in a single chapter and is split between chapters as outlined below.

In order to understand the development of the Society it is necessary to know something about the work of Octavia Hill. Chapter Two therefore gives a brief outline of Octavia Hill's work and some assessments of her influence, working mainly from secondary sources.

Chapter Three looks at the period after 1912 when the Society was gradually formed from groups of women managers meeting together. It begins with a review of the main developments in housing policy and administration. Then women housing managers' progress in employment and the formation of different groups are outlined. The work of these different groups and the moves towards the formation of one society in 1932 are described.

Chapters Four and Five are both concerned with the period 1932-38 because it was a crucial stage in the development of the Society. Chapter Four looks at the background of events in housing policy and administration and progress in employment of women managers. Chapter Five examines the organisation and work of the Society. The ways in which it supported the work and employment of women at the time are described in some detail.

Chapter Six deals with the war years, the effects which

events had on the role of women managers, and the way in which the Society supported them.

At this point the thesis departs from a strictly narrative layout. Because a number of themes needs to be considered across the whole of the post-war period, the first part of Chapter Seven deals with developments in housing from 1945 to the 1980s. The second part follows through the history of the Society from 1945 to 1965, an eventful period for this organisation. The issue of the admission of men, around which debate centred in the late 1940s, is considered first. The Society's activities in this period are outlined with particular attention to the way in which these changed and to the events which led to amalgamation with the Institute of Housing.

The period which followed the amalgamation of the two organisations in 1965 is a critical one for this study and the events are therefore described and analysed in two chapters. Chapter Eight looks at the role of women within the new Institute. Statistics which indicate what happened to women's membership are considered together with comments from interviewees. These statistics demonstrate a rapid falling off in the participation of women together with some complex changes. Reasons for these changes are discussed in terms of group dynamics within the Institute and of feminist perspectives. Chapter Nine then takes a broader view of the changes in women's employment in housing generally over this period and relates this to changes observed within the Institute. The underlying forces at work are discussed



particularly with reference to housing work and its ambiguous relationship to sex role stereotyping, and comparisons are made with other professions.

Chapter Ten brings the whole story up to date with a brief summary of the way in which women in housing began to exert pressure through organised groups again and the relationship between this activity and the earlier history.

Chapter Eleven then considers the hypothesis and draws together arguments about the role of the Society in women's employment and the relative importance of other factors.

## CHAPTER 1

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## CHAPTER 2

### 2 OCTAVIA HILL

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with the Society of Housing Managers, about which relatively little has been written, rather than Octavia Hill, who has received rather more attention (for example Moberley Bell, 1942; Thomson Hill, 1956; Tarn, 1973; Wohl, 1977; Boyd 1982). However, it is impossible to write about the Society of Housing Managers without some consideration of the work and influence of Octavia Hill. This Chapter will therefore briefly examine Octavia Hill's housing work using secondary sources to provide the background for the rest of the study. Firstly an outline of her housing work will be given and then contemporary and later evaluation of her work and influence will be studied in some detail. The different ways in which Octavia Hill's work has been interpreted are themselves of some interest for this thesis and form the focus for the Chapter and its conclusions.

#### 2.2 OCTAVIA HILL'S HOUSING WORK

Octavia Hill's family was one in which some interest in housing had already been expressed, since her grandfather, Southwood Smith, was prominent in sanitary reform in the early years of the 19th century (Moberly Bell, 1942: 5). James Hill, Octavia's father, was unsuccessful at business and eventually went bankrupt. At the age of fourteen Octavia Hill started work at a ragged school and when she began to visit the homes of her pupils became even more aware of their housing

conditions and concerned about it (Moberley Bell, 1942: 25-27). She came under the influence of Ruskin and F. D. Maurice (Boyd, 1982: 100-102).

During this period the movement for sanitary reform of housing was gaining strength and the early 1840s and 1850s saw the foundation of various reform bodies associated with housing, including Model Dwellings companies. (See, for example, Tarn, 1973: 15-40; Wohl, 1977: 14-178.)

An account of the first meeting of the Association for sanitary reform in 1859 gives one of the first formal records of women's role being stressed in this context. Lord Shaftesbury, the Chairman,

"explained how much of the work in its practical detail was specially suited to women, while the legislative must be done by men. Kingsley maintained that a great deal of the insanitary conditions that prevailed were due to the neglect on the part of the small landlords of small houses, and he hoped that ladies would make it part of their work to influence them as landlords in the welfare of their tenants. He dwelt on the high infantile mortality and inexorable fate that hung over so many babies. He urged the necessity for women to take up the work because on it the saving of infant life so much depended." (Tabor, 1927:12)

We can see therefore that these early calls for the involvement of women in housing were based very much on the stereotyped view of women and reflected the "ministering angel" view of women doing welfare work common in Victorian charitable and evangelical literature. (See for example Wohl, 1977: 184.)

A few years later, in 1865, Octavia Hill, with Ruskin's

help. converted this idea into reality (Moberly Bell, 1942: 76). Octavia was looking for housing for some of the female toy makers and pupils she was concerned with, and felt that the only solution was to acquire property and manage it herself. Ruskin, provided the capital to buy three houses but, consistent with the ideas of "five per cent philanthropy" felt that there should be some return on the money. "He showed me, however, that it would be far more useful if it could be made to pay; that working man ought to be able to pay for his own house; that the outlay upon it ought, therefore, to yield a fair percentage on the capital invested." (Hill, 1875: 16) Octavia Hill's work was therefore firmly rooted in the strong traditions of Victorian philanthropy. (See Wohl, 1977: 141-199; Tarn, 1973: 15-41.)

From the beginning, in managing these properties, Octavia Hill put into practice a careful attention to carrying out the landlord's duties, such as repair, together with a personal relationship with the tenants and as an expectation that in the long-run the tenants would behave in a way which was responsible both to their neighbours and to the landlord (for example Hill, 1875: 16-19).

From this small start her reputation for managing property began to spread and other people began to hand over properties to manage or money to invest in such property.

One reason for this reputation was that from an early stage Octavia Hill began to write about her work. For example, "Cottage property in London" was published by

Fortnightly Review in November 1866 and reflected on two year's experience of managing at Paradise Place. The writing was vivid and descriptive with plenty of anecdotes and was very positive about what could be achieved. Octavia continued to write articles of this type and thus her views became widely known.

The work consisted of managing small groups of properties and as it grew Octavia Hill drew in other workers. First of all these were lady volunteers, though Octavia Hill always chose and trained them carefully, but later she began to see the need for more systematic recruitment of workers.

Initially, most of the properties concerned were in the West End of London. An attempt to expand work in Deptford was not successful. In Southwark the work started with properties belonging to private owners (Upcott, 1923: 17): the Ecclesiastical Commissioners as ground landlords helped private individuals to purchase building leases (Upcott, 1923: 17).

Following on from this involvement, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1884 handed over to Octavia a group of old courts to manage and, on being satisfied with this experiment, began to hand over to her the management of larger blocks of working-class property, though the Commissioners retained control of capital expenditure (Upcott, 1923: 18-22). The involvement with an "Institutional Landlord" was an important expansion of the work and itself doubtless helped to pave the way for



the employment. in 1916 after Octavia Hill's death. of Octavia Hill trained managers by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests (later the Crown Estate Commissioners).

Even by 1884 however. Octavia Hill's reputation was well established and she was asked to give evidence to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the working-classes (Wohl. 1977: 196.7).

The work continued to expand slowly. yet the numbers of houses managed was limited. Miss Jeffery estimated that by 1912 (the year of her death) Octavia Hill directly controlled between 1.800 and 1.900 houses and flats exclusive of rooms in tenement houses. although managers trained by her controlled other properties (Jeffery, 1929: 1). Power (1987: 14) states that "she must have controlled or influenced the management of about 15,000 properties" with about 50 trained women managers working with her. The basis for the latter estimate is not, however. stated.

### 2.3 WHAT WAS THE OCTAVIA HILL SYSTEM?

One of the central tasks of this study is to trace the way in which Octavia Hill's work led to the formation of the Society of Housing Managers and how the Society of Housing Managers then supported women's employment in housing. Women from the Society tended to become identified with a particular type of management known as the Octavia Hill system and this influenced attitudes towards them. The reality or otherwise of the Octavia Hill system will be explored at various points in the study but at this stage it is important to look more

closely at what Octavia Hill's own ideas about housing management were.

First of all it is important to note that Octavia Hill was a doer and not a theorist. "I have been asked to add a few words about the houses of the people, but what can I say? There has been so much said. Is it not better now just silently to do?" (Hill, 1884: 11) Probably, like many people, she changed her ideas a little as she grew older and was not entirely consistent. This has contributed to the fact, discussed in the final Section of this Chapter, that a great deal of controversy rages about her view and contribution. This review of her "system" tries to pick out some major ideas and practices and link these with what she said. But Octavia Hill herself did not want to lay down any rigid system and, because of this, even resisted the idea of an association.

"My friends know that it has never seemed to me well to form any association, whether of the owners of the various groups of dwellings we manage or of ourselves, the workers, who manage... Societies, cannot create a spirit... All we can do is, where the spirit exists, to try to qualify workers by giving them training, and then link them with owner and group of tenants." (Hill, 1889)

In the writer's view perhaps Octavia Hill's greatest contribution was simply in giving attention to housing management at a time when it had never before been recognised as an occupation which made any social contribution. Octavia Hill wrote a great deal about the duties of owners of property and the way in which proper attention to management could make a contribution to solving housing problems.

"One can see any day excellent buildings execrably

managed, and one can see tumbledown old places of wretched construction both healthier and far more home-like because well managed. And I may confidently say that the distinctive feature of our work has been that of devoting our whole strength to management". (Letter to fellow workers 1897, quoted in House Property and its Management, Ed. Jeffery, 1921: 17)

It could be considered that the whole history of post-war slum clearance, high rise and rehabilitation policy bears out this importance of good management even in the 1980s.

The aspect of Octavia Hill's views which became more controversial was her stress that housing management should be an integrated function. The ladies trained by Octavia Hill collected the rent, dealt directly with problems concerning the tenants and with repairs (at least with small routine repairs). Many of them found this scope quite demanding but Octavia Hill insisted on their learning the necessary skills and building up the close personal relationship with the tenants which she saw as essential to success, especially with the most disadvantaged groups. "I am certain that you can hunt the poor about from place to place, rout them out from one place and drive them to another: but you will never reach the poor except through people who care about them" (Hill, W.T., 1956: 183). This expresses an emphasis on the value of human relationships which is consistent in Octavia Hill's work but, unfortunately, from the point of view of modern commentators, this emphasis on the value of the individual is linked in Octavia Hill with an opposition to state intervention and a tendency towards authoritarianism.

Octavia Hill's opposition to state intervention in housing, expressed for example in her evidence to the Royal Commission of 1884, is an aspect which damns her in the eyes of many modern commentators.

Miss Upcott, who had worked with Octavia Hill, commented that of course the local authorities which Octavia Hill knew were not like the present day ones. But it is incontrovertible that the substantial gains in housing standards for working-class people in fact eventually came from state financial support for local authority building and that Octavia Hill was opposed to this. She also did have firm ideas about the poor as people who needed to be "trained and guided" which were very much linked with her use of trained upper-class ladies as staff: and, in her relationship with the work and her own staff, could be autocratic, though she also made considerable efforts to delegate and to develop and support the staff she delegated to.

It was Octavia Hill's emphasis on having one trained person to collect rents, deal with day to day repairs and tenancy matters which later became known as the Octavia Hill system, and was very much linked with the Society of Housing Managers. But much of the later criticism centred around the issue of whether this system was suitable for the changed circumstances of modern housing. As we have seen, Octavia Hill was emphatic about the need to avoid a rigid way of working. However, the link between women's work in housing and a particular approach to management became an important influence on the employment of women in housing - as did the emphasis on

training of staff.

#### 2.4 THE TRAINING OF WORKERS FOR HOUSING

Octavia Hill had started off by using lady volunteers but in her view such volunteers needed to be trained. This was largely done by getting new workers to work with experienced members of staff, sometimes under Octavia Hill's own direct supervision.

However, by the time her work had expanded, she realised that paid workers would be needed.

"I have been thinking a great deal about how responsible bodies can, in the future, secure such management by trained ladies as has been found helpful in the past. This has turned my attention much more than heretofore to the thought of how to provide more responsible professional workers, for I felt that, however much volunteers may help, it was only to professional workers that responsible and continuous duties could, as a rule, be entrusted, especially by large owners or corporations..." (Hill, 1900: 5.6)

"Then I realised that my best plan for the future would be, not only to train such volunteers as offered, and the professional workers whom we required, but to train more professional workers than we ourselves can use, and, as occasion offers, to introduce them to owners wishing to retain small tenements in their own hands and to be represented in them by a kind of manager not hitherto existing." (Hill, 1900: 7)

It can be seen that Octavia Hill used the word professional from the beginning and was quite clear what her aims were.

"We can all remember how the training of nurses and of teachers has raised the standard of work required in both professions. The same change might be hoped for in the character of the management of dwellings let to the poor." (Hill, 1900: 7)

In practice the Octavia Hill training required both dedication and hard work. Miss Upcott, who was taken on

by Octavia Hill around 1912 after achieving a degree at Somerville and social work training at LSE (Dennison House). recalled the offer of her first post. She was told

"'Because we couldn't trust you with any decisions at the moment we offer you £70 per year. But you will have to live over the office and pay £30 a year in rent.' So I netted £40; of course I was a trainee... I didn't know anything about housing... that was the last year of her life; very good for me because she really did train one, she was very fine. Very alarming, you know; you knew you were in the presence of someone rather great... The reason I had to live over the office was that Miss Hill managed properties all over London and the managers used to bring their books up to her on a Thursday..." (Upcott, 1979)

The "Letters to fellow workers" which Octavia Hill wrote every year can also be seen as a means of training. She also used them to appeal for women to train professionally. For example, she wrote in 1903

"I have had three applications for paid managers in London during the year which I have been unable to fill, owing to all our trained helpers being absorbed in our own extended area, and there are openings in provincial towns from time to time; but it should be borne in mind that such would only be open to those capable of taking the whole responsibility of management." (Hill, 1903: 8)

This contribution of Octavia Hill to training is acknowledged by many modern writers, but they are often considerably more critical about other aspects of her work. The next Section reviews assessments of Octavia Hill's work by the earlier biographers and by Tarn and Wohl who were writing in the 1970s. It then contrasts the views of two strong critics, Malpass and Spicker, writing in the 1980s with those of Boyd, also writing in the 1980s, who is more sympathetic to Octavia Hill.

## 2.5 ASSESSMENT OF OCTAVIA HILL'S WORK

### 2.5.1 Early biographers and commentators

For many contemporaries and for the period following her death Octavia Hill was regarded with great admiration. Her first biographers took a very respectful attitude. "Octavia Hill and Florence Nightingale were the two greatest women of the nineteenth century." Thus W. T. Hill, whose biography was published in 1956, quotes Lionel Curtis, first honorary secretary of the National Trust (Hill, 1956: 193). He also quotes the phrase "a sainted name" attributed to Arthur Greenwood when Minister of Health (Hill, 1956: 191). Moberley Bell's earlier and probably better known biography also pays glowing tributes. "I am fully convinced that the best of all that is now being done for the better housing of the poor has had for its origin and inspiration the life-work of this remarkable Englishwoman..." (Moberley Bell, 1942) It is interesting to see Moberley Bell's comments on an issue which later became a focus of criticism.

"Octavia had defined her business relation to her tenants as one of 'perfect strictness'. It is interesting that, in an age of more clearly defined social classes than to-day, when the Lady Bountiful and the Grateful Poor were still regarded as admirable characters, the word Octavia was used to express her ideal for the personal relationship between herself and her tenants was 'perfect respectfulness'.

"'I should treat them,' she wrote, 'with the same courtesy as I should show toward my other personal friends: there would be no interference, no entering their rooms uninvited, no offer of money or the necessaries of life. But when occasion presented itself, I should give them any help I could, such as I might offer without insult to other friends, sympathy in their distresses, advice, help and counsel in their difficulties, introductions that might be of use to them, a lent book when unable to work: a bunch of flowers brought on purpose.'" (Moberley Bell, 1942: 87.88)

Moberley Bell does mention an important issue: Octavia Hill's lack of theory.

"Octavia was the least theoretical of all reformers. She started, as she herself said, doing what lay before her as simply as possible. But because she was quick to feel for others, and because she could not see a want without trying to satisfy it, her work developed in rich variety and covered an immense field. But it all started from some concrete individual problem: her housing work had its origin in an effort to find a home for one family." (Moberley Bell, 1942: 278)

However, there has been a great deal of criticism of Octavia Hill's work in contrast to Moberley Bell's admiration. Beatrice Webb is often quoted as an early critic. She felt that Octavia Hill's approach was undermined by her lack of understanding of the true nature of poverty.

"The lady collectors are an altogether superficial thing. Undoubtedly their gentleness and kindness brings light into many homes: but what are they in the face of this collective brutality, heaped up together in infectious contact: adding to each others dirt, physical and moral". (Webb, quoted by Wohl, 1977: 189)

But Beatrice Webb also seemed to agree with some other aspects of Octavia Hill's work which have come in for criticism.

"Beatrice Webb, with the typical self-confidence of her class, bordering on arrogance, wrote that she had few misgivings about intruding upon the privacy of the poorer classes: 'rents had to be collected, and it seemed to me, on balance, advantageous to the tenants of low-class property to have to pay their money to persons of intelligence and goodwill'. She discovered that the tenant regarded her not as a visitor of superior social status, still less an investigator, but 'as part of the normal machinery of their lives...indeed,' she added, perhaps not altogether pleased, 'there was familiarity in their attitude'." (Wohl, 1977: 187)

Wohl also says

"The value of having a legitimate reason for entering the homes of the poor in the guise of friend as much as rent collector, and without the fearful associations connected with the sanitary official or health officer, struck both Henrietta



Barnett and Beatrice Webb as enormous. Henrietta Barnett regarded Miss Hill's plan of women volunteer collectors as one of her most brilliant innovations, for it enabled those with 'superior cultivation' to storm the Englishman's castle, where the connection between rent collector and tenant could by mutual consent 'ripen into the priceless relation of friendship'." (Wohl, 1977: 192)

#### 2.5.2 Tarn and Wohl

Tarn (1973) also views Octavia Hill's approach as superficial. "Whatever her initial success, the solution was never more than a palliative". Tarn also considers Octavia "reactionary as far as physical realities were concerned..she did not take a long-term view of the problems and gave her support to immediate action."

The main reason for this criticism, repeated by others, is that Octavia did, in her evidence to the Royal Commission of 1884, give her support to the idea of shared facilities for flats.

Wohl (1979) on the other hand balances this criticism by demonstrating how much Octavia Hill cared about the physical surroundings in which working-class people lived. "Her whole being revolted against the stark and barren working-class blocks which model dwelling companies were putting up throughout London." (Wohl, 1977: 192)

In fact, Wohl (1977) gives one of the most extensive and well thought out appraisals of Octavia Hill's work. He starts with a fair summary of the existing situation.

"Of the mid-Victorian housing reformers, Octavia Hill was by far the most widely known and respected. Yet it has been her fate to survive, rather like some great 'classic', well-known by name, but

neglected and unread, and she remains the most misunderstood and inadequately handled of the major Victorian reformers. She has, unfortunately, been the victim of partisan history." (Wohl, 1977: 179)

"Despite her stature and great influence, her housing efforts have never been placed firmly within the context of the social needs of late-Victorian England and consequently she remains, as David Owen acknowledges in his monumental *English Philanthropy, 1660 - 1960*, of all the reformers of the time one of the most baffling to the twentieth-century interpreter." (Wohl, 1977: 180)

Wohl reviews her work, its limited scope and admits "One must stress at the outset that, unlike nearly all the others in the field, Octavia Hill managed to reach the less prosperous and irregularly employed labouring classes" (Wohl, 1977: 184).

Wohl criticises Octavia Hill's social philosophy and moves to more emotive language in saying that "Octavia Hill was just one of many middle-class women who invaded the homes of the poor to preach bourgeois respectability and teach domestic cleanliness and economy" (Wohl, 1977: 184).

Wohl criticises Octavia Hill's "despotism" though he acknowledges the beneficial effects her influence could sometimes have.

"Nevertheless, her philosophy of house management deserves careful attention, for, if much of it is unpalatable today, it contains considerable wisdom and commonsense. It is perhaps ironic, at first glance, that while holding that the sanctity and privacy of the home was one of the basic English liberties, Miss Hill did not hesitate to invade it, bringing with her middle-class notions of beauty and domesticity. On the one hand she could applaud the principles of self-help and sturdy independence, and on the other could regard it as her moral and religious duty to lead a life of active interference in and constant control over the lives of her tenants. In her determination to convert the working-class houses under her care into homes of a

bourgeois respectability, and to instil in the working-classes a sense of self-respect, independence and pride, above all in her insistence upon the virtues of punctuality, cleanliness, order and discipline, she began to assume the role almost of an enlightened, all-seeing, but omnipresent, ruler." (Wohl, 1977: 188)

"It is easy to condemn her paternalistic attitudes, but most modern social workers would applaud her insistence that personal knowledge, combined with sympathy and understanding, are the essential ingredients for a better rapport with the urban poor." (Wohl, 1977: 190)

Wohl's strongest criticism was of her underlying philosophy of housing.

"Her outstanding failure was that, in the decades when her contemporaries grasped the essence of the housing question to be one of supply and demand, Miss Hill plodded patiently forward, blithely patching up the few houses under her control, almost glorying in petty detail. At a time when nearly every organ of public opinion was pointing out the need to find a way of building on a scale large enough to house the working-classes, Miss Hill was ridiculing and scornfully attacking the model dwelling companies, insisting that the isolated work of individuals such as herself was all that was required." (Wohl, 1977: 195)

He argues that Octavia Hill's basic lack of understanding of the problem of poverty and her opposition not only to state intervention but also to subsidised housing meant that her efforts only touched a few people and that her "overall effect was as harmful as it was beneficial". "She became an anachronism among housing reformers, even in her own time. Her contribution was, after all, a negative one". (Wohl, 1977: 199)

### 2.5.3 Malpass and Spicker

Wohl's lengthy assessment therefore ends with some fairly stringent criticism: two more recent commentators have been considerably more acerbic.

Malpass (1982). for example. does not mince words. He starts off by saying

"Most writers on housing management still refer to her pioneering work. often implying that she established modern housing management principles almost single-handed." (Malpass, 1982: 206)

He summarises her approach -

"To Hill. housing management meant patient and firm education of the poor in how to lead better lives. as defined by the values of the middle and upper classes. This distinguished her approach from both the commercial management style of the up-market capitalist landlord. and the chaotic non-management style of the down market slum owners." (Malpass, 1982: 207)

"Her status as a pioneer rests on her attempt to create order in the administration of dwellings occupied by people who were widely regarded as irretrievably feckless. and still show a return on investment. Her originality lay in the way in which she combined the role of landlord with middle-class outreach to the poor." (Malpass, 1982: 207)

In discussing the extent to which Octavia Hill made housing a form of social work. he quite rightly discusses her association with the Charity Organisation Society and predominant Victorian values of morality. However. like Wohl. he stresses both her despotism and her opposition to state intervention. He acknowledges her contribution but emphasises limitations.

"She had a genuine claim to be one of the pioneers of both housing management and social work. In particular. her emphasis on establishing close relationships with individuals and families in need has formed the basis of a continuing tradition in social work and retains its relevance in housing..." (Malpass, 1982: 229)

"However. the form of housing management which she devised has played only a minor part in the development of modern practice. Whereas she opposed state intervention and relied on women volunteers to work closely with tenants. it is council housing. run in bureaucratic fashion by a salaried professional group dominated by men. which has become the main setting for the management of rented housing." (Malpass, 1982: 208)

"Despite Octavia Hill's valuable pioneering work in this field. housing management was in effect reinvented in the 1920s as a wholly administrative

activity centred on local government and lacking the moralistic overtones of her method." (Malpass, 1982: 208)

Malpass concludes

"She was essentially a moral crusader and an innovator whose views attracted considerable support at the time. In her own lifetime, however, her relentless adherence to the individualist faith was being overtaken by the rising tide of collectivism which reached its height in the late 1940s. It is only now that the tide is beginning to run her way as basic assumptions about welfare services in modern Britain are challenged by the economic crisis and a government pledged to roll back the state. The political and intellectual climate is today more sympathetic to the kinds of ideas promoted by Octavia Hill than at any time for at least a generation." (Malpass, 1982: 208)

Later Chapters of this thesis will illustrate and discuss the way in which acceptance both of "the ideas promoted by Octavia Hill" and of the work of women may be connected with changes in the "political and intellectual climate" for housing work.

Paul Spicker in a more recent article is even more stringent in his criticisms of Octavia Hill and those who support her views.

"Octavia Hill is clearly held in great regard. An article in Voluntary Housing outlines her approach and exhorts us to 'Go back to the origins of management'... A fancied slight to her memory attracts two pages of letters in Housing... But the legacy she left to housing managers has been baneful. She founded a tradition which is inconsistent with the rights of tenants and destructive of their welfare. Octavia Hill's practice was based in the Christian Socialism of the 19th century: her writings drip with Victorian piety. The positive side of this doctrine was an idealistic belief in the universal rights of all people, including the lower-classes. The negative side was a highly moralistic and judgmental view of her tenants." (Spicker, 1985: 39)

The emotive language in which this article is written is itself of some interest in the current context.

Spicker goes on to distinguish what he regards as Octavia Hill's aims in management: to free tenants from a low class of landlords and landladies; to free tenants from the corrupting influence of degraded fellow lodgers; to relieve them of the heavy incubus of accumulated dirt and to rouse habits of industry and effort. "The development of personal approach to housing management was a part of this policy, based on an individualistic concept of poverty..." (Spicker 1985: 39) Like Wohl he comments that Octavia Hill's principles were misconceived at the time she formed them.

Spicker then argues that certain established practices in housing management, which, "although they are dying out", are still practised in some places, result from the influence of Octavia Hill and her disciples. These practises are: firstly the exaggerated emphasis on rent payment; secondly the use of notice and eviction as a primary sanction against tenants; thirdly there is the emphasis on cleanliness; fourthly there is the treatment of "unsatisfactory" tenants and "problem families" - treatment firmly rooted in a pathological view of poverty. He then quotes J. P. Macey's book on housing management to give evidence of similar views among Octavia Hill's followers in the 1980s.

The article does acknowledge that "one of the reasons why the 'Octavia Hill approach' is valued, is that it offers a model of decentralised generic management with personal contact". But he argues that if such a model is justifiable it is for other reasons which are quite

different from Octavia Hill's: "A model which stresses the rights of tenant rather than their moral duty."

(Spicker, 1985: 40)

Spicker concludes

"It would be unfair to attack Octavia Hill too harshly for her principles; she was, after all, a woman of her time. But this is not to say that the same principles can be accepted in the present day." (Spicker, 1985: 40)

Malpass and Spicker might then seem to suggest that by the 1980s a more stringent view of Octavia Hill's contribution was appropriate. But Boyd, also writing in the 1980s but from a very different standpoint, gives a more sympathetic view.

#### 2.5.4 Boyd

Boyd (1982) discusses Octavia Hill and two other prominent Victorian women, Josephine Butler and Florence Nightingale. Because Boyd's major interest is in the theological views of these women, she brings a different perspective but encapsulates the present question neatly.

"Social historians chronicle the changes in the position of women and the politics of the suffragist movement, and biographers gave us revisionist studies of Mary Wollstonecraft and the literary women, but scant attention has been given England's three great nineteenth century pioneers of social reform - Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill and Florence Nightingale." (Boyd, 1982: XI)

Boyd's discussion focuses particularly on Florence Nightingale and brings out the extent to which she appealed to stereotypes.

"Every school-child has heard of Florence Nightingale while almost none has heard of Octavia Hill or Josephine Butler. Why was Florence Nightingale's life, during these few years in the

Crimea, so memorable, while the lives of the other two women are almost forgotten? The answer lies in the power of the legend and the deep psychological needs that it filled.

"The legend of Florence Nightingale contained much that people wanted to hear over and over again. It centred on two folk heroes - the British soldier and the woman who serves him. It shows each in a noble light. Furthermore, it epitomised what the Victorians believed to be the ideal relationship between man and woman.

"If the legend brought reassurance to the Victorian male - and encouragement to the common soldier whose qualities had long been unappreciated - it also brought hope to the Victorian middle-class woman. Without disturbing the underlying assumptions in the male-female relationship, it showed a woman, living in a setting of danger and excitement, making important decisions, taking on important responsibilities." (Boyd, 1982: 186,187)

Boyd also comments on the way that each of these leaders remained ambivalent in their attitude to feminist issues.

"If these women, eulogised by historians, have been recently neglected, one must look for the reason not in their accomplishments but in their attitudes toward the feminist issues of their day and in their link with a world-view. Christianity, that is rooted in the past. To some of the questions that were of compelling interest to other women, these leaders remained ambivalent. Florence Nightingale said that she wished to make a better life for women yet she also said that she was 'brutally indifferent' to the rights of her own sex...

"Octavia Hill opposed the extension of the suffrage, she extolled the 'home-making' virtues of women as their primary function. Even Josephine Butler, who did so much for the advancement of women, was in some ways conservative. She, too, placed a high value on women's traditional role as home-maker, wife and mother. While she believed in votes for women, she was distressed by the suffragists' methods." (Boyd, 1982: XII)

Boyd's work thus sheds some light on reasons why feminists may find Octavia Hill's views and personality somewhat of a problem. But most, if not all, of the historians of housing have been men and feminism has not seemed to be a central issue with them.



Boyd describes the way in which, like Josephine Butler and Florence Nightingale, Octavia Hill held a "different but equal view" of the role of women which "defied motherhood." Yet not only did these women contradict this view in their own lives, but also they drew more radical conclusions about the way in which the maternal nature could contribute to the wider sphere. She argues that the emphasis upon the maternal nature of women could lead in two very different directions. It had helped to create a society based on male power with women related to the home. But the same talents which were applied in the home could be applied in a "wider sphere". The complementary roles of men and women could be exercised in public life.

The tension between the desire for "equality" and the desire to acknowledge and protect the values traditionally associated with women's role has been evident in the modern women's movement and currently is very much an issue. It can be viewed as a fruitful source of tension, giving rise to constant debate and re-evaluation which can also help modern commentators to come to terms with the contradictions posed by Octavia Hill. But it could also be one reason why Octavia Hill appears to arouse so much controversy and receive less than impartial treatment. Power (1987), who gives the most recent reappraisal, does not introduce much new evidence but attempts to stress the positive contribution made by Octavia Hill in introducing and developing "a management technique which brought slum property up to minimal standards for the day at a cost that the mass of slum dwellers could afford" (Power, 1987: 15). But she

also stresses the limitations of Octavia Hill's views.

## 2.6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The themes which have emerged from the assessments of Octavia Hill's work which seem to be of importance for the present study are:

1. How extensive and substantial was Octavia Hill influence on housing management?
2. What exactly was the nature of that influence?

In addition, from the point of view of this thesis, it seems apposite to ask the question

3. Why does Octavia Hill seem to arouse so much controversy and strong feeling?

Each of these will be considered in turn.

How do historians assess influence? How much of what is regarded as influential in the past is simply what historians have come to agree is influential? One source of evidence of influence is what contemporaries regard as influential and by this standard Octavia Hill would be and has been awarded a place of some importance in the history of housing management. But there are plenty of examples of individuals given prominence by their contemporaries and down-rated by later generations. So the question of how historians make these reassessments still remains. Feminists have certainly argued that in this process, the work of women is consistently ignored and passed over wherever possible. (For example Bristol women's studies group, 1979: 4.5)

In this context it is interesting to note that Malpass, despite his knowledgeable discussion, completely denies Octavia Hill's contribution to defining a role for professional and trained staff in housing. The present study will demonstrate how the idea of professionalism and the practice of close attention to training was continued by the Society of Housing Managers right through to the 1960s.

One more objective type of evidence about influence is to trace the process by which it passed down. The writer would argue that, in the case of the influences on housing management as a whole, this work has simply not yet been done. The lack of an adequate history of housing administration is one factor which has made the whole writing of this thesis more difficult. There is little work tracing the emergence of early housing management.

It is because of this lack of real evidence that two writers, critical of Octavia Hill and of similar theoretical viewpoints, can pose contradictory arguments about her. Spicker argues that Octavia Hill is a major and baneful influence on modern housing management while Malpass argues that housing management was recreated in the 1920s without the "moralistic overtones" of Octavia Hill's method. Clearly both cannot be right.

The present study traces the way in which the Society of Housing Managers encouraged the employment of women in

housing and thus illustrates some of the ways in which "Octavia Hill influences" moved into wider housing management. It also briefly discusses some of the other influences on the emergence of housing management both inter-war and post-war. But a major work of balancing up the extent of the different influences in housing management has not yet been carried out. However, it is hoped that this present study will at least establish that to view Octavia Hill and her tradition as responsible for all that happened in housing management must be incorrect.

The second issue was the nature of Octavia Hill's influence. There is a degree of consensus on some aspects of this. Both friends and foes acknowledge the value of Octavia Hill's emphasis on building up a relationship with the tenant, and on the importance of good management, getting repairs done, for example.

There is less consensus on whether Octavia Hill is responsible for the rather authoritarian and dictatorial tendencies which appeared in many local authority housing departments and some associations. To some extent the assessment of this is linked with the assessment of the extent of influence as mentioned above and perhaps cannot be disentangled. It is also linked with Octavia Hill's lack of theory and the contradictions in her own work and personality which many of the writers do acknowledge. She was autocratic and could appear "despotic" in her relationship with tenants. Yet the oldest interviewees mentioned, for example, that they were taught never to step over the tenant's threshold without the tenant's

permission. i.e. not to invade the tenant's privacy and that this came directly from Octavia Hill. This conflicts with many later views of the Octavia Hill tradition as encouraging incursions into the tenants home.

The writer considers that this issue may be one aspect of early housing management which was closely linked with the "public health" tradition. Incursion into tenants homes mainly occurred because of the need to check for "bugs" and this was apparent to most authorities concerned with slum clearance, whether or not influenced by Octavia Hill. (See Chapter Three).

Similarly Spicker lays at Octavia Hill's door "an exaggerated emphasis on rent payment...the use of notice and eviction as a primary sanction against tenants". But the society interviewees, including the oldest among them, laid great emphasis on the "mutual obligation" view, i.e. good maintenance and management in return for rent, and certainly on the practice which allocated considerable time to helping families pay rent rather than having to take them to court and evict them. Their consensus was very much that eviction was an admission of failure rather than a primary weapon. Many of them would argue that it was modern local authority landlords who failed to be effective in their relationship with tenants and who, because their systems were both impersonal and badly organised, ended up evicting more tenants.

A conclusive decision on these issues could only be reached by careful and quantitative analysis comparing

the practice of Octavia Hill influenced and non Octavia Hill influenced local authorities in the 1920s and 1930s. This has not been done and maybe never could be done because of the lack of sufficient representative evidence. More detailed studies, for example Ryder's (1984), of council housing in County Durham may be beginning to emerge, and will cast more light on the administration of housing but it may still be difficult to get sufficient accurate and comparative material. In this case, therefore, it is surely incumbent on commentators to review the available evidence but admit that their interpretation is going to be coloured by their own views.

The final question is, why does Octavia Hill arouse such strong feelings, and in particular is this intensified because she was a woman?

Discussion here has to be speculative but this writer suggests that the very emotive and irrational way in which the arguments have emerged indicates that the writers feel threatened or antagonistic with regard to some deeply rooted or underlying values. The two most likely clusters of values to be involved are political values or prejudice or ambivalence about women.

The political aspect arose because Octavia Hill opposed state intervention in housing and gave evidence to the Royal Commission of 1884 to that effect. The arguments about her being despotic and agreeing to lower physical standards are also used in this context. Most, if not

all. of the writers in housing history have a left wing bias which often leads them to be very critical of people whom they see as holding up the "progress" towards extensive state intervention in housing and subsidy. Leaving aside the question of viewing history as a progress towards one specific point. it is logical to ask. do other people who hindered state intervention in housing get attacked in the same kind of way? The answer must surely be no. despite the fact that some of them, e.g. Chamberlain and Macmillan, were operating in circumstances where the effectiveness of state intervention had already been demonstrated, and had more real power.

Are the attacks on Octavia Hill more acrimonious because she was a woman who dared to demonstrate some practical ways of advancing housing work but who held unacceptable political views? It could be argued that it is simply because she was a woman that she stands out and is therefore a target. But Angela Burdett Coutts, another female philanthropist of the period, with conservative views, is not attacked in the same way.

The difference is that Octavia Hill founded a movement which did have some influence and historical continuity - she was seen as successful and powerful.

Boyd's discussion of the way in which Florence Nightingale's life was used to reinforce a popular stereotype. the way in which her inner conflicts contributed to her constant invalidism, and her use of this invalidism as a power ploy, and her final slow

decline into arteriosclerosis are relevant here.

Octavia Hill's life could not be quite so easily adjusted to conform to the stereotype. Collecting rents and arranging for the effective management and repairing of property does not have the "ministering angel" image. Octavia Hill, like Florence Nightingale, suffered from inner conflicts, had bouts of invalidism and "breakdown". But she seems by later life to have resolved this far more satisfactorily both in maintaining human relations and being able to delegate work and work out some kind of a balance between public and private life. As a successful "governing woman" she is therefore open to all the ambivalence which men feel about strong women without all the "disguise" which is wrapped around Florence Nightingale.

For the purpose of this thesis, the way in which Octavia Hill has been seen both by contemporaries and by modern writers is of as much importance as the actual "facts" of her life. The ambivalence towards the role of women in housing work is one of the key issues of this study. It is not possible quantitatively to assess the extent to which the tension between Octavia Hill's life and the stereotype of the woman's role is responsible for some of the acidity of attacks upon her - and equally for emotional response in support of her. It is hoped however that future discussion of Octavia Hill will at least take this possibility into account. The onus will be on writers to acknowledge bias and to admit the present lack of the kind of evidence which would



facilitate more soundly based conclusions about Octavia Hill's influence.

## CHAPTER 2

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## CHAPTER 3 THE EARLY YEARS, 1912-1932

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## CHAPTER 3

### 3 THE EARLY YEARS, 1912-1932

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter traces the gradual development of organised groups of women managers after the death of Octavia Hill in 1912.

In order to set the position of the women housing managers in context, it begins with an outline of the major developments in housing from 1912 to 1932. It then looks at the developments in employment and association among the women housing managers and ends with a brief survey of what had been achieved by 1932. It draws heavily on information from interviews with the oldest interviewees who were working at this time, a small number of publications by the women housing manager's groups, and limited secondary sources.

#### 3.2 MAJOR EVENTS IN HOUSING 1912 - 1932

In the nineteenth century, as a response to the appalling condition of working class housing, a number of attempts had been made to regulate house building and, towards the end of the century, to help trusts and local authorities to build to improve conditions. The most effective of these was the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890 but "of all new houses built between 1890 and 1914 less than 5 per cent were provided by local authorities". (Burnett, 1978:181) Under the 1890 Act local authorities were still expected to sell these houses within ten years.

## The Housing and Town Planning Act 1909

"contained one clause important in housing history: Section 40 provided that 'Notwithstanding anything contained in the principal Act (1890) it shall not be obligatory upon any local authority to sell or dispose of any lands or dwellings acquired or constructed by them'. Quietly the principle of local authority house-ownership crept in, even if it were not enthusiastically acted upon. The previous Acts had insisted that those authorities who did build should disencumber themselves of house-property within ten years so as to shed a responsibility generally considered the business of private enterprise." (Gauldie, 1974: 305).

Gauldie argues that among the important factors which influenced this change of attitude were the reform of local government (by the Local Government Act 1888), the work of the London County Council in demonstrating what could be achieved in low cost housing design and a change in attitudes.

"The twin levers engineering that shift were, first, signs of real demand by the working classes for improvement in their housing conditions and, secondly, a new toleration, even encouragement, of that demand by the middle classes." (Gauldie, 1974: 296)

She gives examples of the growing involvement of trades councils in meetings agitating for better housing and argues that the evidence of the 1886 Commission on Depression and the 1891 and 1911 censuses had helped to convince the middle classes of the need for state intervention by demonstrating that not only the bad housing conditions of the poor but also the fact that voluntary action and five percent philanthropy could not solve the problems of their housing.

Bowley puts more weight on the direct influence of the war.

"The brief interlude of the Great War changed all this. ...Housing policy became a national issue. It was no longer the special interest of isolated

groups of social reformers. It had graduated into the world of party politics... The immediate cause of the change was the combination of the introduction of rent control in 1915 and the low level of building during the Great War. (Bowley, 1945: 3)

Bowley argues that the Rent and Mortgage Restriction Act, passed in 1915, was a response to popular agitation against rising rents and part of the war time machinery built up piecemeal to control the prices of the main necessities of life. It had important long term consequences.

First of all Government had intervened in controlling rent levels in the private sector and was never again able to disembarass itself of this responsibility. In its turn it brought other responsibilities.

"As the Government had once meddled in the house market, it could not abandon all responsibility for the supply of houses. It was politically necessary to make some effort to control and organise the supply of new houses, particularly of working-class houses to let." (Bowley, 1945: 9)

The Rent and Mortgage Restriction Act controlled rents and

"put an end to what lingered of hopes for private-enterprise building of low cost housing. With rents fixed at a level that was uneconomic in view of rising costs of building materials no speculator would again attempt to build for the working classes" (Gauldie, 1974)

In addition the requirement for repairs to existing houses had built up and, because of lack of building during the war, there was an accumulated crude shortage of housing (Bowley, 1945: 10-14).

More recently Daunton (1984) has emphasised the way in which the fear of social unrest was a powerful motivating force for the ruling classes to embark on more fundamental state intervention in housing. In addition

he suggests that there was concern about structural failure in the housing market and the Conservatives were prepared to abandon, rather than support, the private landlord who was politically unpopular (Daunton, 1984: 708)

The Housing and Town Planning Act 1919 (the Addison Act), while not in the end being as successful as reformers wished, did establish some very important precedents. It imposed on local authorities the duty of surveying the needs of their districts for houses and making and carrying out plans for provision of houses needed. The approval of the Ministry of Health was to be obtained for the plans before they were carried out. The first surveys were to be completed within three months of the passing of the Act. Thus permissive powers given to local authorities by the Housing Act 1890 were now obligatory and not just related to slum clearance (Bowley, 1945: 16-17). The subsidy provided was just as important an innovation. All losses in excess of a penny rate incurred by local authorities were to be borne by the Treasury, provided the schemes had been approved by the Ministry of Health. "The local authorities were guaranteed against any serious losses on their schemes and the state had taken financial responsibility for the provision of working-class houses." (Bowley, 1945: 17)

Under the subsidies provided by the Addison Act and the 1919 Housing (Additional Powers) Act, a total of 213,821 houses were built (170,090 local authority, 4,545 by public utility societies and 39,186 by private enterprise). All these, apart from approximately 15,000



of the local authority houses. were completed before the end of March 1923 (Bowley. 1945: 123). thus marking a major achievement roughly equivalent to just under half the estimated shortage of houses at the Armistice. However. the number of houses to be built had been limited in 1921 on the grounds of economy. In fact the entire national housing programme petered out in 1922-3. Nevitt (1966: 82) argues that this was not just because of the inflation in building costs caused by the subsidies but also because it caused a rise in rate contribution which was unacceptable at a time of increasing unemployment.

Under the Conservatives. the Chamberlain Act of 1923 continued to provide subsidy to private builders but limited the local authority subsidy to £6 per dwelling per year for twenty years. Thus the local authority had now to bear the burden of the risks of loss on public housing. The act reflected the belief that private enterprise could solve the housing problem. given a little encouragement. a recurring belief despite the amount of evidence to the contrary. (Nevitt. 1966: 85-86)

With a minority Labour government in 1924 policy changed again. The Wheatley Act of 1924 continued the Chamberlain Act in operation but raised the level of local authority subsidies. It envisaged a much more extensive and long-term programme of local authority house-building. However the level of subsidies was cut again in 1929. (Bowley. 1945: 40-45)

By the time a Labour government gained power in 1930, attention was moving to the problem of slum clearance. The Conservatives argued that the general provision of housing had now improved and could now be left to the private sector but, even if that argument was not accepted, the growing pressure to do something about the appalling conditions of slum housing could not be ignored. "The foundations of modern slum clearance were laid by the Greenwood Act, passed by the Labour government in 1930 as the economic depression moved into a crisis." (Burnett, 1978: 237) Subsidy was provided by the Treasury for slum clearance varying directly with the numbers of people displaced and rehoused. (Merrett, 1979: 50)

The rents fixed were left to the discretion of the local authorities and encouragement was given to rent rebate schemes to allow rehousing of poorer families. Although Greenwood had envisaged the continuance of new building alongside slum clearance, once again economic conditions affected the implementation of the Act and local authority building in the 1930s became overwhelmingly building for slum clearance. Bowley regards this as signalling the end of attempts to increase or improve the supply of housing for working class families (Bowley, 1945: 45). The concentration on slum clearance marked a return to the "sanitary policy" of the pre 1919 era but there was a difference in that, on national level, "solution by subsidy" was applied to slum clearance. The Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1933 confirmed this trend by repealing the Wheatley subsidy on all houses for which plans had not been approved by the end of December

1932 (Bowley, 1945: 46). This switch to slum clearance was to have an effect on the type of households rehoused by local authorities and gave rise to calls for more professional housing management.

### 3.3 EARLY MOVES TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF AN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN MANAGERS

"Miss Hill had, before her death in August 1912, so organised her work that each manager trained by her should be able to carry on independently when she was gone. Of the various estates which the Church (then the Ecclesiastical) Commissioners had put into Miss Hill's hands, one - 800 tenancies in Walworth - had always been in Miss Lumsden's charge. Other managers, Miss Covington in Westminster, Miss Mitchell in Southwark, and Miss Joan Sunderland in Lambeth, were in control so far as relations with tenants were concerned but went weekly to report to Miss Hill at her office.... At Miss Hill's death, these managers were put in touch with Messrs. Clutton and became directly responsible to them.... The major part of .... properties, bought and handed over for management to Miss Hill by people interested in her methods, belonged to Sir Ernest Schuster (whose holding later became the Wilsham Trust) and to the Improved Tenements Association, a company formed in 1900 by Miss Hill to buy up and regenerate old houses. Many of these properties were in the Notting Hill area, where Miss Dicken, aided by Miss Perrin, showed a genius for managing "difficult" tenants. A group of properties in Southwark, owned by Lady Selborne, was taken over by Miss Galton, who also took charge, later, of considerable estates in the Old Kent Road belonging to the Church Commissioners.... Miss Yorke.... remained at 190 Marylebone Road and took over responsibility for most of the smaller outlying properties and centralised the work at this office where Miss Upcott worked for the first four years...." (Upcott, 1962: 5)

This passage is quoted at length for two reasons. The first is that many of these 'older managers' or 'those who had worked with Miss Hill' and their offices formed a key link in keeping women's work in housing management going during the period from Octavia Hill's death to the formation of the stronger, more formal occupational group in 1932. The second reason is that the records for this period are more sparse and fragmented than for later

ones. Not surprisingly, only two interviewees (Miss Upcott and Miss Larke) were involved in housing work in 1912 though a few others had begun to train or work by the late 1920s. While Miss Upcott wrote an account of the early development of the work in 1923 (Women House Property Managers), the more detailed information quoted above is taken from an article written when she was in her seventies (Upcott, 1962: 5-7). There are a few other accounts of parts of the early work (for example, Brown, 1961) and these can be complemented by some primary sources, particularly the publications of the organisations concerned. However there are some periods, for example 1920-26, when such primary records are sparse.

According to Upcott (1962: 6), informal afternoon meetings held by Miss Yorke formed a way of keeping people together after Octavia Hill's death. Also Miss Upcott in her interview said that by 1916 Joan Sunderland "who....had as a girl quite young....been trained by Miss Hill and she was a very prized worker for her she routed around and found these various people who had rather lost contact." Initially a meeting of these workers was held to discuss whether they should respond to the government's appeal to 'take a man's job' during the war. But the women felt that they could not take over the work of estate agents "without changing the methods so as to conform with their own principles", and that when the men returned the management would return to former methods, "as the women would be at least morally bound to hand back the Agencies" (Upcott, 1962: 6). So they decided

not to take on these jobs but the meeting proved the spur to forming an association of their own. The Association of Women Housing Workers was formed in 1916.

It comprised not only those who had recently been part of Octavia Hill's staff, but also women who had in the past collaborated with her. It had a council and a training scheme "combining practical and theoretical training, with attendance at lectures, culminating in an examination for an assistant's certificate after a year's work and a manager's certificate after two more years of satisfactory work." (Upcott. 1962: 6)

The Association of Women Housing Workers' own leaflet of 1916 stated that its aims were:

- "1. To unite all engaged in Housing Work.
2. To have a representative body to which all interested in Housing Work may apply.
3. To arrange for the training of workers and promote the advancement of the knowledge necessary for the efficient management of house-property."

Miss Lumsden was its chairman, Miss Galton its secretary. The names of a council of 25 and 51 members (including the council) are appended. It had a subscription of 2/6d a year. (Association of Women Housing Workers. 1916) By 1917 the name had changed to Association of Women House Property Managers and a short annual report was issued. (AWHPM. 1917b)

Unfortunately, some documents of this early Association, which lasted up to 1932, seem to be lost. However a number of the early lists of members and rules and of the annual reports survive (see Appendix 1). While the annual reports for 1916 and 1917 are printed leaflets,

those for 1918, 1920 and 1926 are in typewritten form only, possibly indicating a period when the association was struggling for existence. Like many voluntary bodies, it initially operated on slender resources. For example, "Financially, the Secretary was able to report a balance of £2.6.10d." (AWHPM, 1917b). The earliest address given for the Association is the Women's Institute, 92 Victoria Street, London SW (AWHPM, 1917b), followed by Red Cross Hall, 10 White Cross Street, SE1 (AWHPM, 1918). The Association subsequently operated from 48 Dover Street, Piccadilly, W1 (AWHPM, 1920a) and 3 Bedford Square (AWHPM, 1930b). In June 1930 a move was made to Abford House, Victoria (AWHPM, 1931b) but the Association moved from there to 36 Victoria Street in December 1932 (AWHPM, 1933a).

Although it may have had a struggle to establish itself, this Society appears to have been the most substantial grouping of Octavia Hill Managers during this period. By 1930 it was able to employ a secretary for at least four days a week (AWHPM, 1930b). There was however another grouping of women managers clustered around Miss Jeffery at the Crown Estate Commissioner's Office at Cumberland Market, which became the Octavia Hill Club, and another grouping of municipal managers, emerged later (Upcott, 1962: 7).

### 3.4 PROGRESS IN EMPLOYMENT

#### 3.4.1 Work with the Crown Commissioners

Miss M. M. Jeffery, who had been Octavia Hill's secretary, in 1916 had been appointed to manage the

Cumberland Market (London) Estate of the Commissioners of Crown Lands (Later the Crown Estate Commissioners). This was an estate "of about 850 houses divided into about 2,000 tenancies, occupied by a population of about 7,000" (Parker Morris, 1931: 2). Miss Jeffery was considered by some of the 'older housing managers' not to be properly trained since she had been a secretary and not a manager (Interviewee). However she was considered by another interviewee to be the "brightest of the lot". Certainly Miss Jeffery and the Crown Estate Office were to play a key part in publicising Octavia Hill work and in training staff. Miss Jeffery seems to have been particularly keen to extend the work and get people out into the provinces. She formed her own system of training and The Octavia Hill Club for the people who had worked with her (Anon, 1931). There was obviously some degree of rivalry between Miss Jeffery and the other group of managers. As one interviewee remarked "the besetting sin of the two early societies they both thought they alone had the truth, the direct line of apostolic succession". Miss Jeffery was felt by some interviewees to be weak on administration and to refer excessively to what Octavia Hill would have done. She was working on commission and she had to pay staff out of it. So staff would be taken on as the work expanded but if money did not come in as expected there might be doubts about how they would be paid. On the other hand, Miss Jeffery was evidently very good at picking up and encouraging people who had some leaning towards housing work, providing them with a starting point and encouraging them to move into new posts in the provinces (Interviewees). Only one copy of "The Octavia Hill Quarterly" has been located so far.

This is a duplicated booklet of some substance, containing an interesting early account of the work at Cumberland Market and work at St. Pancras Housing Association and Kennington LCC, as well as a report of the conference of municipal managers. (Octavia Hill Club, 1928).

At first the estate was organised from an office in Lambeth but it rapidly became necessary to form an office in one of the houses on the Cumberland Market Estate.

"The workers soon outgrew it. Then three rooms in No. 42 Cumberland Market were taken. Here indeed there was rather more space, but no shelves for the rapidly increasing number of files: and desks and chairs could not be got in quickly enough for the rapidly increasing work and staff. Collectors made up their money on the floor, and wrote their orders balancing their pads on their knees.... Looking back to those earlier days - to the rush and hurry of taking over houses in the intervals of collecting: of writing specifications on Sunday because there was no time during the week: of working often until ten o'clock at night - and then contrasting the present time of orderly organisation and arrangement, reveals a work of care and thought which has been well worthwhile." (Allen, 1928: 4.5)

The workers faced practical problems as well as office organisation ones.

"One of the first difficulties which faced the workers was that of finding contractors to undertake repairs. Mr. Atkins had worked with Miss Jeffery on her other Estates and now came over to this one. At Lambeth, when Miss Jeffery was working there, he had given weekly instruction to collectors on the repairing of taps, WWP's, sash cords, the use of paint, etc." (Allen, 1928: 4.5)

### 3.4.2 Work with the Ministry of Munitions

Miss Upcott in Women House Property Managers (1923)

describes the background to the work with the Ministry of Munitions. The Ministry of Munitions had built estates to provide permanent or temporary accommodation for some



of its workers, but had encountered problems of management.

"In the Welfare and Housing sections of the Ministry there were men acquainted with Miss Hill's successes in regenerating slum-property and, when some of the problems seemed beyond the scope of ordinary estate management, it was to her school of thought that they turned. Lord Dunluce, now Earl of Antrim, versed in housing knowledge through his work with The Peabody Trust, took the first step in suggesting the introduction of women and Mr. G. H. Duckworth, already for a generation a supporter of the private side of the work, was, as Director of Housing in the Ministry of Munitions, a staunch and loyal friend to the women managers, not only during the war, but in the difficult and unpopular time afterwards." (Upcott. 1923: 32)

They approached the women managers' group and "Miss Sunderland and Miss Upcott visited the estate at Dudley, where they found rising arrears and a low standard of maintenance." (Upcott. 1962: 6) They wrote a report which led to the appointment of a number of trained women housing managers in 1917. Miss Sunderland went to Barrow. Miss Lumsden to Dudley with Miss Upcott as her deputy. Subsequently, Miss Lumsden was given an advisory post at the Ministry itself while Miss Upcott took over the management of the Dudley estate. Miss Sunderland went to do Red Cross work in France, replaced by Miss Galton. Miss Allen and Miss Geldard were appointed to Sheffield (Upcott. 1962: 6) where the corporation had acted as the Ministry's agent but was "relieved of the work of management by the Ministry." (Upcott. 1923: 32) "Miss Vickers made a permanent cottage estate at Shirehampton near Bristol a model of contentment." (Upcott. 1962:6)

Miss Upcott provides a good example of the background and work of one such manager. She had followed a degree at

Somerville with one year's training at the London School of Economics at a time when few of her contemporaries had heard of social work. After that a contact had suggested that Miss Hill wanted a worker. Miss Upcott, who was very impressed with Octavia Hill's work leapt at the opportunity and was a trainee with Octavia Hill in the last year of her life and carried on working with Miss Yorke after Octavia Hill's death. After a brief spell with another charitable organisation, Miss Lumsden asked Miss Upcott to share the Ministry of Munitions work in Dudley and as Miss Lumsden took over more national duties Miss Upcott ran the estate in Dudley.

Miss Upcott's account of her work in Dudley gives an idea of the energy and innovation which she brought to the job and of willingness to consider the wider aspects of estate life. In her interview she said that she spent three and a half years at Dudley.

"...when I took over Dudley it had been managed by somebody who really didn't know anything about it and about half the tenants were in arrears so we had to start collecting rent. When I left there were.... about four pounds in arrears. We were in entire charge of the housing estate. We did the letting and we did the accounts, reported to the Ministry, collected the rents...."

Dudley was a temporary estate. (See Figure 3.1) "It was built of either rather flimsy concrete cottages or else wooden and there were no paths or railings or anything, everything had to be tidied up." Miss Upcott had to take on an assistant and they were concerned about developing community facilities on the estate as well as the physical aspects. "We didn't know any other line so we started a Women's Institute." This became very flourishing and then Miss Upcott took steps to try to

obtain a district nurse for the estate. since the organisation in Dudley which provided such nursing felt they could not take on the estate. The nurse's salary, £130 a year, had to be guaranteed. Failing to obtain help from more wealthy people in Dudley, Miss Upcott took on the responsibility herself

"and the tenants were awfully good. they rallied round and they had whist drives and sales of work, bazaars and all kinds of things you see and we raised that £130 and we got a nurse for ourselves. that was a great thing because at that time there were practically no social organisations you see. so we had this organisation which was very successful and they promoted boy scouts and brownies and one tenant took over the boy scouts because she was interested in this. We had a certain amount of boxing. I was a proprietor of a boxing club which shocked a good many people. they thought it rather shocking."

On another estate

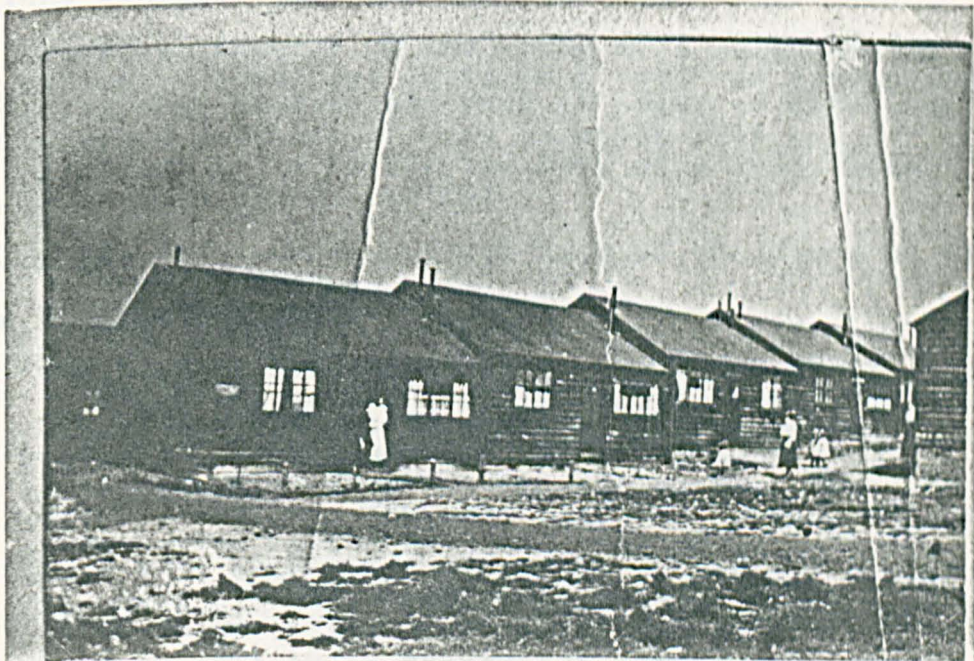
"considerable damage was done to the houses by the children during the holidays. The putty from the windows was taken away. the fences were used as rafts on a neighbouring pond. The managers organised a very successful play centre. thus directing the children's energies towards better purpose." (A member of the Women House Property Management Association (1919))

Miss Upcott felt a rather moralistic intervention in tenants affairs to be part of her duty. but framed the kind of argument which was to continue for many years. In correspondence with a friend she comments on an incident at Dudley:

"I don't think you would think individual immorality of the voluntary type a matter only for the individual if you were a neighbour who had to get up at 5 am and couldn't get to sleep before 3 am because of the doings of that kind of house. The tenants took the matter into their own hands once and ejected six male visitors from a house. Since then I managed to dislodge the woman, who was frightened of course." (Upcott, 1920)

FIGURE 3.1

PHOTOGRAPHS OF MISS UPCOTT AND STAFF  
AT DUDLEY CIRCA 1920



Sir George Duckworth instituted periodic meetings of the managers employed by the Ministry (Upcott, 1962: 7).

"The value of the work was shown by the great improvement in standards and the avoidance of rent strikes which were prevalent at the end of the war. The Ministry seemed satisfied and Miss Lumsden devised a training scheme to ensure continuance of this type of management." (Upcott, 1962)

However, this attracted the notice of the magazine "John Bull", a journal which took an ultra patriotic stance, had evidently regarded the return of jobs to ex servicemen as part of this and was not above adding a flavouring of chauvinism too. For example, in May 3rd 1919 the Editor wrote under the heading "voluntary ladies"

"Those good and gracious ladies who stepped forward to undertake voluntary work temporarily in Government and other administrative offices should consider now whether they are not keeping returned men out of a berth. There are, we think, a number who might gracefully retire.... We refer more particularly to those "voluntary" workers whose "expenses" are sometimes more than other persons' salaries." (John Bull Editor, 1919a)

This was followed on May 10th by a story about the appointment of a post for Chief Clerk at Ilkeston War Pensions Committee falling to the

"darling daughter of the vicar of a neighbouring parish. "Women and children first!" is a fine and chivalrous slogan: but when it comes to depriving returned soldiers of jobs to which they are entitled, it is rather too much of a good thing." (John Bull Editor, 1919b)

By July 5th the journal had got hold of the story of the women housing managers.

"The Housing Department of the Ministry of Munitions ...is having the impudence to train twenty women ...as house and estate agents. Of course the Ministry has no houses to speak of, but it is training these females to manage working-class houses. They are provided with a course of lectures at Battersea Polytechnic. ....When qualified the women will become Superintendents, at £250 a year. This cold-blooded, premeditated throwing-away of public money is the most outrageous so far. The whole project is so absolutely absurd, futile and

unnecessary. First of all, if such jobs are to be created, men should have them....

The article went on to argue that in fact suitable men to do the jobs were already available. (John Bull Editor, 1919c)

The controversy about this issue even led to a question in Parliament (Ministry of Health, 1919c).

The attack in the press evidently squashed any formal plans for continuing this type of management. Miss Upcott said:

"well of course we didn't like it but we felt we couldn't stand out against the returned soldier ...they had some claim to jobs and we should be very unpopular if we'd been thought to be obstructive to their finding jobs and we felt that we couldn't really stand out about that." (Upcott, 1979)

In any case the work with the Ministry had only been temporary as the permanent estates were handed over to the local authorities in whose areas they were situated.

But, though this experiment came to an end, it was subsequently seen as having been important. It had demonstrated that women could cope with larger scale management for a public authority and could 'pull up' estates that had begun to deteriorate. It is probably no accident that two women housing managers to be appointed to local authorities in the 1920s (Miss Upcott and Miss Geldard) had both worked for the Ministry of Munitions.

One of the other early housing managers, Miss Larke, had got into government service by a rather independent



route. Coming from a builder's family she had acquired an interest in housing and spent five years with Miss Jeffery at the Crown Estates. Wishing to broaden her field of work. Miss Larke applied directly for a government job and was sent to the Ministry of Munitions in 1916. working as an assistant to the Architect. Mr. Robert Robertson. The Department was building hostels, semi permanent and permanent houses for munition workers.

"Mr. Robertson had to negotiate with District Surveyors, choose and supervise builders, as well as instruct and supervise his staff of architects to whom I had to refer in his absence. Once I had to receive and pacify a deputation from an estate in Barrow in Furness who were thinking of strike action. There was. I am glad to say, no strike...." (Larke. 1981)

Like the other managers, Miss Larke returned to civilian life with broader experience.

### 3.4.3 Contact with Central Government and the Ministry of Health

Even before the work with the Ministry of Munitions got under way fully, the women housing managers had been trying to further more general contacts with Central Government. AWHPM's Annual Report for 1917 describes the beginning of the approach from the Ministry of Munitions. It also says

"We have also had an interview with Sir M. Bonham Carter at the Ministry of Reconstruction. It seems possible that any rebuilding schemes after the war will be put into the hands of the local authorities with a Government subsidy and a central body behind them.... We have also got into touch with the Housing Committee of the Local Government Board (by means of a letter written by Miss Jeffery to Mr. Leonard of this department), and Mrs. Rawlins and Miss Jeffery have appeared before the Committee to discuss plans of working class houses." (AWHPM, 1918b)

In 1918 "Miss Jeffery is on Lady Emmott's Committee of

the Reconstruction Committee" (AWHPM, 1919b). This was the Women's Housing Sub-Committee which had been set up at the Ministry of Reconstruction following pressure from women's groups of which AWHPM was one (McFarlane, 1984: 27).

The Ministry had been trying to encourage women's participation in matters to do with housing. Following on from the work of the Women's Housing Sub Committee, Circular 40 in 1919 advised local authorities "to take such measures as are practicable to obtain the views of women" (on matters to do with provision of amenities and house plans). It advocated the cooption of women onto Housing Committees and the setting up of Women's Advisory Committees. (HMSO, 1919e)

It seems possible that there were other contacts which were not mentioned. Certainly by 1920 the Ministry of Health, which had been set up after the war, was giving the women housing managers some backing. The Minister of Health, Christopher Addison, took a deep personal interest in housing and the Ministry had begun to issue a housing journal from July 1919. Women managers and the desirability of their work are mentioned in a number of issues of this journal as is also the desirability of women's advisory committees at local authority level (for example, Ministry of Health 1919a, Ministry of Health, 1920a and a number of others).

In July 1920 Housing Journal devoted its major article to "The management of property" pointing out both the need for good management and for training for the managers.



It said

"Little is done except by the Association of Women House Property Managers, who have rendered such admirable service in redeeming unfit property.... Property management is a profession as well adapted to women as to men" (Ministry of Health, 1920b: 1)

A further article in the same issue on "Property Management as a solution of the slum problem" describes the work of "Octavia Hill" managers in some detail and mentions that Neville Chamberlain's Committee on Unhealthy Areas had suggested that local authorities purchase unhealthy areas on a large scale and entrust them to the care of women managers (Ministry of Health, 1920c: 6).

The report of this Committee on Unhealthy Areas gave favourable attention to the views of Octavia Hill that better management of older property could produce a good environment which would help slum tenants to raise their standards while maintaining lower rents. However it concluded that given the scale of the problem the only way to get extensive improvement was "to substitute a public body like the local authority for the private owner in these unhealthy areas" (Ministry of Health, 1920d: 5). The Manual on Unhealthy Areas subsequently issued by the Ministry in 1919 had also given favourable reference to the work of trained Octavia Hill managers. (Ministry of Health, 1919b:23)

The second report of the Unhealthy Areas Committee, which was published in 1921, also argued the case for improved management. "Considerations of this kind draw us to the conclusion that the management of old property on the

Octavia Hill system ...might be extended with advantage to the community ." (Ministry of Health, 1921).

This advocacy of women managers by the Ministry of Health was not without its critics. A letter in the August issue from the secretary of the RICS pointed out that the writer of the earlier articles had

"overlooked the fact that there is such a body as the Surveyor's Institution, the members of which manage a large proportion of the house property in Great Britain and, I believe, do so to the advantage both of owners and tenants. The women house property managers referred to in the article have done good work....but I think it unfortunate that the writer should have appeared to indicate that they alone were moving forward in this matter."  
(Goddard, 1920)

After 1921, the journal "Housing" was reduced to a monthly issue and then stopped parallel to the cuts then being imposed on the housing programme, so this source of advocacy disappeared.

However, AWHPM continued to be invited to give evidence to official committees - for example, the 1920 report mentions giving evidence before the Committee of the Ministry of Health "on the operation of the Rents Restriction Act". (Presumably this was the Salisbury Committee, sitting in 1920 (Holmans, 1987: 391).)

Contacts clearly were maintained; for example, in 1926 "Mr. George Duckworth, CB, formerly Controller of the Munitions Housing Schemes", was elected a Vice President of AWHPM (AWHPM, 1927).

#### 3.4.4 Women's Employment in Local Authorities

Two members of the Association went to Birmingham at the end of the war. In 1921 Amersham Rural District Council

had "appointed Miss Geldard as the best candidate from a list of applicants of both sexes, but with no actual adoption of the principles derived from Octavia Hill." (Upcott, 1962: 6) In 1923 Upcott commented "The Amersham Rural District Council, beginning with a few scattered rural cottages, is testing the value of a woman manager, and such a development seems to offer great promise for the future." (Upcott, 1923: 34)

For a time there was not much further progress until the Association took a more active role in encouraging the employment of women. In the late 1920s

"we circularised a great many authorities and nobody took any notice except Sir Parker Morris (who wasn't Sir then), and he had the brilliant idea of bringing up his entire committee to inspect our work. The committee were taken to Miss Jeffery's estate at Cumberland Market and to the Church Commissioner's estate of Walworth. They were very impressed at what was being achieved with old and run down properties."

The committee decided to appoint an Octavia Hill manager to manage a particularly difficult estate and Miss Upcott went. "The curious thing was in those days it was awfully difficult to get anybody to leave London (Miss Jeffery) rather pressed us to go, you see it was our duty." (Miss Upcott, Interview)

Parker Morris described in 1931 some of the factors which contributed to the decision to employ a woman manager.

"At Chesterfield the Corporation had carried out (after the war) a slum clearance scheme and removed the tenants to a new housing estate. After a time it was found that the condition of many of the houses was deteriorating and the trees, fences, and grass margins were suffering serious damage. Disturbances amongst the tenants were not infrequent. Heavy arrears of rent accumulated during the coal dispute in 1926. After one or two instructive experiments, the Corporation decided to investigate the Octavia Hill system, and, as a

result. they enthusiastically adopted the system for their estate to which the tenants from the slum area had been removed. After the system had been in operation for two years it was found that 90 per cent of the original tenants had shown definite and more or less continuous improvement in the condition of their homes." (Parker Morris, 1931: 3)

Thus. at Chesterfield Miss Upcott managed an estate which housed tenants who had come from slum clearance and were rather poorer: "there was a man there also who did the more prosperous lot" (Upcott, 1979). Over three years the work expanded as Chesterfield was demolishing old properties and rebuilding and Miss Upcott was able to give advice on the size of properties to be built. When she left she was replaced by another member of the Association (Upcott, 1979).

Encouraged by the example of Chesterfield, similar appointments were made at Walsall, Chester, West Bromwich, Stockton-on-Tees and Rotherham. Parker Morris seems to have been influential in advocating this change and he remained a very staunch friend of the women housing managers throughout the history of their organisation. The senior managers in London helped to train people for these new posts (Upcott, 1962).

By 1929. in a pamphlet printed by the Charity Organisation Society. Miss Jeffery could boast that "the Crown Estate has supplied up to January 1929 eleven of the present fifteen provincial municipal workers and five of the seven managers" these being the ones at Chesterfield, Stockton-on-Tees, Walsall, Rotherham, Scarborough, and Bebington, plus two working in London for St. Pancras Borough Council (Jeffery, 1929). Leaving aside a certain amount of self congratulation by Miss

Jeffery (some of the workers had been trained in other offices as well). this does illustrate the importance of the Crown Estate Office in particular, and of the older London offices in general, of preparing people to take up these new posts.

Another example of the influence of the older offices can be seen in Kensington where the Medical Officer of Health had been so much impressed by the results achieved by Miss Dicken at the Improved Tenements Association that she was asked to manage some borough property in Notting Hill prior to the appointment of an Octavia Hill manager by the Council (Galton, 1959).

#### 3.4.5 Private Employment and Trusts

It is important to remember that the early housing managers working for private individuals and even for the Church Commissioners were working on commission (calculated on rent collected) and paid their staff out of it. Kathleen Brown, commenting later on the superior conditions at Kensington Housing Trust where the committee had invested in a pleasant office, said

"In the early days many an Octavia Hill trained manager, paid on commission, had to find the office furniture and equipment out of her own pocket. The office would be the front parlour of a tenement house and the student would work at the schoolroom table from the manager's old home and the telephone, when this was installed, would stand on a little occasional table from some forgotten drawing room." (Brown, 1961: 6)

The scope of the work also remained limited in some instances. For example, with the Church Commissioners "all capital questions, general level of rents, financial policy generally, are kept in the Commissioners' own

hands." (Upcott, 1923: 22)

Nevertheless work with the housing associations and trusts continued to be important for the women managers especially as new societies were formed in the 1920s and 30s as a response to the appalling housing conditions (Allen, 1981: 48). Those linked with Octavia Hill work included the St. Pancras Housing Association and the Kensington Housing Trust in London, and the Liverpool Improved Homes and Birmingham COPEC in the provinces (Barclay, 1976; Brown, 1961; Fenter, 1961; Baskett, 1962).

Annie Hankinson wrote about the work of the Manchester Housing Company Ltd. both in her article and in a letter to Housing in 1919 (Hankinson 1918; Hankinson 1919).

This society had been formed to buy and manage property on Octavia Hill lines and was also prepared to manage for other owners. By 1919 they had 150 properties and were operating along financially sound lines.

Another article in Housing describes the management of buildings in Southwark where an estate known as "Queens Buildings" had been built by a company which went bankrupt. It was taken over by the National Model Dwellings Company as burdened by debt but the whole management of the property was given to a woman manager working on Octavia Hill lines. By 1919

"The Directors attribute the steady increase in the takings and the general improvement of the property, to the methods adopted by a woman manager and her staff, and especially the personal influence exercised by them." (Ministry of Health, 1919d)

The Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society was formed after a national conference of Christian churches there in 1924 and as a response to the very poor housing conditions in Birmingham. Women such as Anne Smith, a factory inspector and Florence Barrow, a Quaker, were important in getting a group interested in housing action established. Some of the women, including Miss Lidderdale, who had been trained under Octavia Hill, initially collected rents on a voluntary basis. But as the number of houses grew it was recognised that a full-time paid worker was needed. Among others, Miss Jeffery was consulted and in 1926 Miss E. M. Fenter, a graduate who had trained with Miss Jeffery, was appointed. (She continued with the Society for many years until retirement in 1953.) (Fenter, 1960: Chapters 1 & 2)

The Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd., formed in 1921, was a cooperative society with a more specific focus on providing housing for women who needed to make their own homes. Its scale of operation remained small however (Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd., 1935).

Liverpool Improved Houses Ltd was formed in 1927 to help the poorest tenants. They invited 'Octavia Hill management' from the start and also took on management for private owners, though by 1928 the number of houses managed was still small. At this stage there were still 18 women listed as members compared with nine men (Liverpool Improved Houses Ltd., 1928). Eleanor Rathbone was also involved in launching the Association (Allen, 1981).

The St. Pancras Housing Association had been formed in 1924, largely through the work of Fr. Basil Jellicoe. Irene Barclay, who had been trained by Miss Jeffery, was appointed as its Secretary in 1925 and this Association went on to make a substantial contribution to housing in its area. Barclay contrasts the Societies registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1893 with the earlier large Trusts - Peabody, Lewis, etc. - which had dominated the voluntary scene. "After 1924 a large number of associations and trusts registered under the Provident Societies Act came into being." (Barclay, 1976: 17)

It can therefore be seen that women were playing quite a prominent part both in forming and running these new housing associations, but little attention has been given to this contribution. It is acknowledged in Patrick Allen's unpublished account of the development of housing associations (Allen, 1981) but little detail is given.

### 3.5 THE WORK OF THE WOMEN HOUSING MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

#### 3.5.1 Organisation of the Association

The Association of Women Housing Workers started off with a council which consisted of 25 members, a committee including chairman, secretary and seven other members. Since the total membership listed was only 50 this seems a rather top heavy kind of organisation (Association of Women Housing Workers, 1916).

This form of organisation, however, was continued by



AWHPM which had a council and committee of similar size: 55 members and one associate were listed (AWHPM, 1917a).

By 1920 there was a Training Committee which was quite active, and a propaganda committee which had not been quite so active (AWHPM, 1921). By that year there were 65 members and 19 associates, and 21 council members.

By 1926 the Association had a President (Viscountess Astor) and three Vice Presidents: the Countess of Selbourne, The Lady Emmott and Miss Rosamund Smith (AWHPM, 1927). Three more Vice Presidents, Sir Stanford Downing, Secretary to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Captain Townroe, Housing Correspondent of "The Times", and Mr. George Duckworth CB, formerly Controller of the Munitions Housing schemes, were elected Vice Presidents in that year (AWHPM, 1927).

By the 1930s the Association had a full time secretary. There was a Council which met twice in 1930, an Executive Committee and two sub-committees, one for Finance and one for Training. There had been three General Meetings of the Association during the year. Also Junior Members meetings had been held "at the sanction of the Executive Committee" (AWHPM, 1931b). The form of organisation then remained much the same until the formation of the new united organisation in 1932.

Since minute books are not extant it is not possible to see in any more detail how this organisation actually worked, although it is clear from the publications and the training schemes that it did function reasonably

effectively. The appointment of Presidents and Vice Presidents was clearly used as part of the Association's propaganda activities, keeping up contacts with influential people. Lady Emmott for example, was a contact with the National Council of Women and Chair of the Housing Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1918 (McFarlane, 1984: 27).

### 3.5.2 Training

#### The Formal Schemes

In its first leaflet in 1916, the Association of Women Housing Workers had given training as one of its aims and this emphasis was continued by AWHPM. This point was also emphasised in the standard leaflets, publicity to other organisations and individuals. By 1917 AWHPM had been able to draw up a training scheme and had two workers training. "The scheme provides for those taking up the work as a profession and for those wishing an insight into Housing Work as part of other social training." (AWHPM, 1917b) A year later the Association had decided that a fee should be charged for training but there are no details of this (AWHPM, 1918b). However the report for 1918 noted a difficulty which was to continue for some years. "We offer a long training with no pay and no definite prospect of work at the end of it, not encouraging conditions for anyone having to earn their own living." (AWHPM, 1919b) The report notes a suggestion for the raising of a fund for training but this had not yet materialised.

By 1920 there was an active Training Committee with a

training scheme and a syllabus for an examination. Those who passed it were awarded Assistants Certificates (AWHPM, 1920a). By 1926 there were six students in training, two of whom passed the Intermediate Examination of the Surveyors Institute (AWHPM, 1927). The printed training scheme for AWHPM which is extant appears to belong to this period as it was originally published from 48 Dover Street. This mentions the AWHPM scheme for theoretical and practical training and examinations for Assistants and Managers Certificates after one and two years training respectively.

"Girls who have matriculated should consider taking the BSc London degree in Estate Management, coming to the Association for practical insight into the work both before and during their college course."  
(AWHPM, 1921-26)

By 1929 there were eleven students whose names are given in the report (AWHPM, 1930b) and a number of them went on to become important in the later work of the Society and housing, for example, Helen Alford who became housing manager at RB Kensington (Alford, 1981) and Margaret Hurst who became the first woman housing manager in South Africa in 1934 and subsequently the first housing management adviser to the Ministry of Health in 1943 (Hill, 1981). The training scheme had been revised and reprinted and what is probably a copy of this scheme is extant, published by AWHPM at Abford House (AWHPM, 1931d). (See Figure 3.2) This scheme provides for candidates being interviewed by the Training Committee. The fee to the Association was twenty guineas and, in addition, students would have to meet examination and lecture fees. Training was for two years and included practical and theoretical work. Students were required to qualify for either the Woman House Property Managers

FIGURE 3.2

ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN HOUSE PROPERTY MANAGERS TRAINING SCHEME 1931

TRAINING SCHEME.

The Association of Women House Property Managers undertakes the training of students in the management of house property on the lines laid down by the late Miss Octavia Hill.

Candidates for training are interviewed by the Training Committee.

Candidates should be at least twenty years of age and should have had a good general education. An University degree is an advantage. As the work involves an active life and exposure to all weathers, good health is essential.

The fee to the Association for training is twenty guineas, and in addition students will have to meet lecture and examination fees, which vary between eight and seventy guineas according to the examination taken.

The training is generally of two years' duration, and includes practical and theoretical work. The first month to be on probation.

1. Students receive practical instruction on three estates in London and the provinces in collection of rents, selection of tenants, various forms of book keeping connected with estate management, and supervision of repairs, etc.

2. Students are required to qualify for one of the following:

The Certificate of the Chartered Surveyors' Institution.

The Bachelor of Science degree (Estate Management), University of London.

The Sanitary Science Certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

At the discretion of the Executive Committee an Assistant Manager's Certificate may be given to a student after a year's work, and a Manager's Certificate to a fully

SYLLABUS.

REPAIRS. Decorations; usual small defects in house, such as stoves, locks, taps, sash-lines, etc. Specifications and estimates.

SANITATION. Complete drainage system, water supply, and sanitary fittings.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION. Causes of damp, roof repairs, ventilation.

SANITARY LAW.

LAW OF LANDLORD AND TENANT.

ASSESSMENT AND RATING OF PROPERTY.

ELEMENTARY BOOK-KEEPING.

ECONOMICS.

*Some of the Books recommended are:*

"The Sanitation of Buildings." (Swinson.)

"Sanitary Science." (Adam.)

"Sanitary Law." (Porter.)

"Drainage and Sanitation." (Blake.)

"Law of Landlord and Tenant." (Adkin.)

"Local Taxation." (Adkin.)

"Book-keeping." (Parry and Shott.)

"How to Abolish the Slums." (Simon.)

"The Slum Problem." (Townroe.)

"House Property and its Management." (Allen & Unwin.)

examination of the Chartered Surveyors' Institution or the BSc Estate Management, University of London or the Sanitary Science Certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute. The report for 1929 also mentions a course of lectures on the administration of local government and the Social Services given at Bedford College (AWHPM, 1930b). The special scheme with the Chartered Surveyors Institution is described in more detail in the report for 1931 (AWHPM, 1932a). The syllabus included Building Construction, Estate Accounts and Law of Landlord and Tenant as well as requiring approved training and practical experience. This method of examination was to become the major means of theoretical training under the women housing managers' societies.

#### The Experience of Interviewees

In the very early days, practical training was on the job but theoretical training was more difficult to come by. Larke, whose family "built and owned houses" and who "was always more at home with hammer and chisel than with needle and thimble" (Larke, 1981) recalls that prior to 1915

"Somehow I heard of a class for Housing Management taking law, technical work, sanitation and so forth. It was being taken by an eminent surveyor and sanitarian while he was studying for his Barrister's degree. Very soon during the late afternoons I found myself on a high stool among 20 young men listening to lectures delivered in a very dry way, but this man, W. T. Cresswell, was interested to know why I was there. He soon suggested I sit for the exam of the Royal Sanitary Institute and set me to studying sanitary appliances at the nearby Sanitary Institute. I enjoyed reading the law subjects most and after a second try obtained my M.R.San I. One other woman had this..." (Larke, 1981)

Another interviewee remembered

"you either became a surveyor or did BSc Estate

Management, or you could take a "sanitary inspector's thing". The surveyors was a long term thing - didn't want it really. So I took this other horrid thing - really meant for clerks of works and builders - so we went round looking at sludge, drains and roofs. Got hold of a builder and got taken round."

The surveyors' examinations were only just become open to women: Miss Jeffery encouraged Irene Barclay to sit for them and Misses Barclay and Perry became the first women surveyors following the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 (Barclay, 1981).

By 1930 the Association had acquired a paid secretary and a permanent office but was obviously still working on a very modest basis. "I poked around and found, got down to this funny little office" was not an untypical remark from an interviewee about the Association at this stage. Nevertheless such an office was a help in recruiting some of the educated women who were beginning to emerge from the universities and looking for information about suitable employment. From interviewees it also seems that the Association had also begun to arrange for people to visit suitable offices to help them to decide whether housing management was a suitable career. This practice was to continue and was particularly helpful to those who knew little about housing.

Another interviewee, Miss Lamplough, had in fact come in to housing work via taking the BSc in Estate Management and being among the first 30, and the first woman, to get that qualification. At that stage it was not easy for a woman to find work in a private surveyor's office and Miss Jeffery persuaded her to try housing management (Lamplough, 1981). For most people, however, the full

surveying qualification was too much to contemplate and, until a properly relevant examination was established, theoretical training was probably rather haphazard.

Although great stress was laid on practical training on the job, particularly in the early stages, this could be less than satisfactory. One student was in 5 offices in one year and felt that she could not learn much moving round that fast.

Even in Miss Jeffery's office the training could be rather haphazard.

"Now it was curious training. It was very good on the personal side because that depended very much on who you were taken round with, it was a very interesting estate, it had some ghastly property which was going to be pulled down in time....on the repair side because you had these small contractors, caretakers and so on and all that was extremely good experience...but how much people learnt on repairs depended on who they got taken round with."  
(Interviewee)

### 3.5.3 Publicity

The women housing managers from an early stage realised that publicity was a key issue. AWHPH's first report states "The difficulty is still one of getting in touch with more property owners" (AWHPM. 1917b). By the next year decisions were being taken about circulating a standard leaflet more widely, probably "Working Class Houses under Ladies' Management" (Association of Women Housing Workers. 1916). Copies were sent to organisation inside London and to national bodies. Pamphlets and notices of training were sent to colleges and settlements (AWHPM. 1918b).

By 1918 this was still a subject for concern but it was noted that another means of publicity, involvement with other organisations and official committees, was already being tried (AWHPM. 1919b). There were thus two major, though interlinked, aspects of publicity: written material and links with other organisations, and these will be considered briefly.

### Written Publicity

From an early stage small leaflets about the work seemed to be used as a major means of publicity but, as these are undated, it is not possible to be entirely confident about the sequence as, quite clearly, material was re-used. A leaflet written by Miss Yorke and Miss Lumsden, "Miss Octavia Hill's Method of House Management", gives a historical review of the beginning of the work by Octavia Hill and the number of properties managed by her at the time of her death. It goes on to describe the way in which the work is carried out, emphasises the need for training and refers enquirers to the authors (Yorke and Lumsden, undated). "Working Class Houses under Ladies' Management", originally published by the Association of Women Housing Workers, contains just one paragraph about Octavia Hill but expands the other material, using some of the same phrases (Association of Women Housing Workers, 1916). A later leaflet published by the Association of Women House Property Managers, "House Property Management by Trained Women", shows a more sophisticated approach but contains similar material (AWHPM. 1921-26). It seems likely that a basic leaflet of this type was used throughout this period.



supplemented by other leaflets written by members which were republished or circulated by the Association.

Opportunities were also taken to provide articles for newspapers or journals or to get publicity by writing letters to them. As early as 1913, Annie Hankinson had gained local publicity for the work of the Manchester Housing Company (Hankinson, 1913) and her later article for the "Woman Citizen" was subsequently republished by AWHPM (Hankinson, 1918). In 1919 an article written by "a member of the Women House Property Management Association" appeared in the Land Union Journal and this was reported and circulated (a member of the Women House Property Management Association, 1919).

An article in The Times, April 8th 1931, by Sir Reginald Rowe, entitled "A Work of Slum Reclamation", was an account of the work of the Improved Tenements Association but also discussed the work of women managers extensively (Rowe, 1931). In February 1931, The Times published "Women as Estate Managers" discussing their work with approval and mentioning the training given by the Association and by Miss Jeffery (Anon, 1931). Both these were reprinted and published by The Times Publishing Company and circulated by AWHPM.

Extensive use was made of opportunities to present papers to other organisations who might be interested and of publishing these papers. Thus, a paper presented by Miss Geldard at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Housing Association in 1923, on the management of working class house property in a rural district (Geldard, 1923), was

reprinted from the "Clerk of Works Journal" and circulated in this form. Papers presented by Miss Thrupp for the Royal Sanitary Institute (Thrupp, 1929) and Jean Thompson for the Institute of Public Administration (Thompson, 1931) provided leaflets which could be used for publicity.

Miss Jeffery had "House Property and Estate Management on Octavia Hill Lines" published by the Charity Organisation Society and "Notes on the Octavia Hill System of House Property Management" by the National Housing and Town Planning Council (Jeffery, 1929). The latter body also published a "Memorandum upon Property Management and Slum Clearance" by Parker Morris, then Town Clerk of Westminster (Parker Morris, 1931). This pamphlet was specifically directed towards local authorities in the light of their slum clearance duties.

Miss Upcott is an example of a member who was active in all these different means of publicity. An article for the Economist in 1918 was recirculated by AWHPM (Upcott, 1918). Her Memorandum on the management of a municipal estate at Chesterfield (Upcott, 1927b) was published by the National Housing and Town Planning Council. A letter to the Morning Post in 1927 (Upcott, 1927a) and an article in the Woman's Leader (Upcott, 1932) are further examples of her industry. A more substantial booklet, "Women House Property Managers" was published by Building News. This described the early development of the work under Octavia Hill and after her death and became a major source of reference for this. It had forewords by Nancy

Astor and Margaret Wintringham (Upcott, 1923).

### Links with Other Organisations

It can be seen from the existence of published papers that use was being made of talks by members as well, but the first extensive list of these is found in the Association of Women House Property Managers' Annual Report 1930. This mentions seven meetings which had been addressed by members over the year, covering a fairly wide range: the Royal Sanitary Institute Congress, Wrexham Borough Council, Women Citizens Association, women's clubs, local authorities, and a branch of the Auctioneers and Estate Agents Institute. Mention is also made of a number of conferences and meetings attended by the Secretary and other members (AWHPM, 1931b).

Besides speaking at and participating in meetings of other organisations concerned with housing, the Association also seems to have had strong links with some of the women's organisations. We have already noted (Section 3.4.3) that there were women's groups with an interest in housing and that the women housing managers had joined with them on the Women's Housing Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction. It was clearly important to keep in touch with this constituency. It is likely that many of these contacts were informal, or through joint membership, and there were many levels of contact. For example, there are early mentions of correspondence with Women's Institutes and the Association was itself situated for a time at the Women's Institute at Victoria Street (AWHPM, 1918b). In 1926 the Association sponsored a motion at the conference of the

National Council of Women about the reconditioning of older houses (AWHPM, 1927). In 1929 a resolution was sponsored at the NCW conference on the desirability of "The Octavia Hill system of house property management" and the Secretary addressed local meetings of NCW (AWHPM, 1930b). In 1931 Miss Upcott gave a lecture to the Women Public Health Officers' Association as well as addressing the National Council of Women and the Westminster Women's Cooperative Guild and other members are recorded as speaking to women's organisations and at girls' high schools (AWHPM, 1932a).

### 3.6 THE MOVE TOWARDS ONE ASSOCIATION

In 1928 Miss Upcott held a successful conference at Chester which was attended by practically all the municipal managers and their assistants. "But this conference emphasised the fact that a regrettable division had come about in the professional grouping of Octavia Hill trained women." (Upcott, 1962: 7) This was between the Association and those in the Octavia Hill Club trained by Miss Jeffery. The conference of municipal managers would have highlighted this because, as we have seen, while initially it was some of the "older managers" of the Association who had gone out to the provinces, Miss Jeffery had been a significant force in encouraging people to take the new posts. There was a strong feeling, therefore, that one association should be formed and discussions about this started around 1930. Even at this stage, however, there were difficulties. The intense personal influence of Octavia Hill was still strong: discussion centered around questions of who best represented her tradition.

"The question of qualifications for membership had engendered some controversy, some wishing to limit this to those actually engaged in paid professional work, others remembering the old voluntary workers who had been the backbone of Miss Hill's early work. Finally, it was agreed that anyone who had done bona fide housing work under Octavia Hill should be equally eligible with the present professional managers." (Upcott, 1962: 7)

The disputes over principle seem to have been exacerbated by a degree of personal rivalry. To the younger managers and to those out in the provinces, who felt a great need of support, the need for one association was so obvious that they felt impatient with these discussions. "I can remember thinking that it was about time that they stopped arguing....over things which one or other societies had....things they were hanging on to....and forget all this back history." (Interviewee) A tendency to hang on to "back history" was a charge which was to be levelled at this group from time to time. However agreement to the form of amalgamation was finally achieved and the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers was brought into being and the assets of the previous societies were handed over to it (Upcott, 1933). Miss Marshall from Leeds was the first chairman, Jean Darling, who had by then gone to Norwich, the honorary treasurer and Miss Thrupp gave up her post at Chester to become the first secretary (Upcott, 1962: 7).

### 3.7 CONCLUSION - THE ACHIEVEMENTS 1912-1932

At the time when Octavia Hill died all that remained was a scattered group of women who had been trained by her. By the end of the 1920s they had already gathered into groups and provided support for members to penetrate new areas of employment. Employment at the Crown

Commissioners and at the Ministry of Munitions had already shown that women could handle housing management for large public bodies. From an initial situation where local authorities did not employ women in housing management, posts had been obtained in fourteen authorities (though this remained only a tiny percentage of housing authorities). Employment in the housing associations was also increasing.

Both the Association of Women House Property Managers and the Octavia Hill Club had managed to use the press to publicise the work of women managers and the Association had produced a number of its own publications. At the beginning of the period efforts had been made to set up a training scheme but these were hampered by lack of an appropriate examination and theoretical instruction. By 1930 more appropriate examinations had been arranged and the training system had become more formalised.

Parker Morris' "Memorandum", published in 1931 by NHTPC, provides a useful summary of some of the gains in employment (Parker Morris, 1931). After mentioning the Church Commissioners and Crown Commissioners he mentions Rotherham, Chester, Cheltenham, Kensington, Leeds, St. Pancras, Stockton, Walsall, West Bromwich, Bebington and Bromborough as employing trained women property managers and new employment at Westminster. The 1932 Annual Report of the Association also mentions appointments at Cambridge Housing Society, the Borough of Cambridge, United Women's Homes Ltd., Tunbridge Wells, Westminster Housing Trust, Bethnal Green and East London Housing

Association and that the Councils of Brighton and Newcastle-under-Lyme were also advertising for women estate managers.

As there is no complete list of members for either group at this time, this is the best evidence which we have about the range of employment, but does not fully state the extent of employment for private owners or with the older housing associations.

The Annual Report for 1932 also states

"The Fulham Borough Council took evidence upon Octavia Hill methods and interviewed one trained woman, but a man superintendent was finally appointed.... The Housing Committee of the City of Liverpool recommended the appointment of a Woman Housing Inspector with two assistant but the matter was finally rejected by the City Council."

Opposition to the employment of women was still present, even though significant gains had been made. It can be seen that the argument that women had a "special aptitude" for this kind of work was being used, but this could lead to them being diverted only to the management of the "worst properties". It was to be some time before there was to be agreement with the Ministry of Health's statement that "Property management is a profession as well adapted to women as to men" (Ministry of Health, 1920b: 1). However, a sound basis both in internal organisation and in employment had been provided on which the new Society could build.

### CHAPTER 3

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## CHAPTER 4

### 4. THE HOUSING BACKGROUND AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN MANAGERS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The period 1932 - 1938 was a key period for housing work and the housing management function of local authorities and for the development of the Society of Housing Managers. In order to do justice to its importance it is necessary to devote two chapters to it. This Chapter deals with the housing background to this period and with the employment of women managers in local authorities and housing associations. Chapter Five will deal with the organisation of the Society during this period and the ways in which it added to the progress of women managers.

The next Section of this Chapter therefore reviews the major housing legislation of the period and the two official committees which had relevance to housing management: the Moyne and Balfour committees.

Section three considers the employment of women housing managers. The effects of slum clearance work on the local authorities and the "dual system" in which responsibilities were split between men and women managers are discussed. The difficulties which women managers encountered in the local authorities are illustrated by an account of specific incidents in Leeds, the LCC, Liverpool and a more general controversy carried on in the columns of "Municipal Journal". The recollections of women housing managers who were in

employment at the time also cast light on some of the factors at work. The final part of this Section illustrates the way in which women managers came to be employed in some of the housing associations.

## 4.2 THE HOUSING BACKGROUND

### 4.2.1 Legislation

The previous Chapter showed how the Labour Government's Greenwood Act of 1930 began the return to the sanitary policy of the pre-1919 era by emphasising slum clearance as well as new building. Ramsey MacDonald's National government which came to power in 1931 completed the shift to slum clearance.

"It held that private enterprise output was even in 1932 so large that councils no longer needed to build for general needs. Its role should be contained therefore to slum clearance and rehousing." (Merrett. 1979: 55)

The Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1933 repealed the Wheatley subsidy on all houses for which plans had not been approved by the end of December 1932. The same general policies were continued by the 1935 Housing Act. This made it the specific duty of local authorities to survey the extent of overcrowding in their areas and to prepare plans for providing sufficient accommodation. Overcrowding was to become a legal offence with penalties applied to both landlord and tenant.

"It was the pre-Great War sanitary policy in the modern dress of subsidies and the compulsory exercise of powers by local authorities... The introduction of a scheme to abolish overcrowding in 1935 did not alter the fundamental character of the policy." (Bowley. 1945: 140)

Although Bowley (1945) considers that the plans put



forward by local authorities for abolishing the slums were inadequate. the switch to slum clearance at this point did have important consequences for the type of housing management done by some local authorities. The 1936 Housing Act, which remained for many years the principal consolidating Act, continued the same sanitary policy (Bowley, 1945: 144). Local authorities were to keep one housing account for all houses built under the housing acts from 1919 onwards. The subsidies could thus be regarded as a pool out of which the rents of individual houses could be adjusted as appropriate. The act also included the power to equip a dwelling with furniture and the power to provide buildings for recreational purposes e.g. community centres or tenants' clubrooms. The 1936 Act consolidated practically all of the previous legislation and until 1957 constituted the principal Act (Macey and Baker, 1973: 19). Although the legislation of the mid-30s restricted the scope of local authority building, the financial and management provisions of the Acts indicate that the need for more long-term systematic and comprehensive management of the local authority stock was gradually becoming apparent.

The final Act of the period, the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1938, was a purely financial measure and revised the subsidy scale so that the distinction between slum clearance and the abatement of overcrowding was abolished (Bowley 1945: 142). But the new subsidy was less generous than the Greenwood subsidy (Bowley 1945: 141).

#### 4.2.2 The Moyne Committee

Despite the fact that by the 1930s many local authorities were extensively involved in housing provision, the Conservatives still looked for a time when government could withdraw from subsidising public housing. They were not entirely convinced that local authorities should continue as housing providers. In the early 1930s discussion of other administrative arrangements for providing public housing centred around the idea of a National Housing Board. Municipal authorities, not surprisingly, were not keen on this idea which was being actively canvassed in 1933.

"Representatives of municipalities who attended the recent Housing Conference in London were not seriously impressed by the vague proposals put forward for the establishment of a National Housing Board. Although Sir Austen Chamberlain, who presided, stated that it was intended to co-operate with the local authorities, few of the speeches gave any understanding of the municipal point of view. Even Sir Raymond Unwin, President of the Institute of British Architects, was strangely silent about municipal housing achievements, and gave no indication as to how the new body would avoid overlapping with municipal activities... Only in answer to a pertinent question from a member of the LCC Housing Committee was the information extracted...that he hoped the government would support the proposed organisation by financial guarantees or funds. In that case obviously there will be less public money available for municipal housing." (Municipal Journal, 17.2.33).

However, further action was taken by the government to investigate the National Housing Board idea. A departmental committee on housing was set up in 1933 under the chairmanship of Lord Moyne.

The Society contributed evidence to the Moyne Committee and tried to make their work known.

"Miss J. M. Sunderland and Miss Marshall gave evidence before the English Departmental Committee

on May 19th, as delegates of the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers, and written evidence has been sent to the Scottish Committee."

"The former committee has taken evidence also from Mrs Barclay and Miss Perry, among the representatives of the St. Pancras House Improvement Society Ltd., and from Miss Blyth as a representative of the Kensington Housing Trust Ltd" (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, July 1933).

Miss F. Horsbrugh MP, a member of the committee, was asked if she would care to see something of the work of members of the Society, but "though she accepted, she has not yet visited any of the estates" (SWHEM Minutes 6.5.33).

The committee issued its report in July 1933 (Cmd 4397). It strongly supported the establishment of a National Housing Board and suggested the setting up of local House Management Commissions. Both of these proposals were strongly attacked by representatives of the municipalities.

"Generally speaking, any architect or builder who has intimate experiences of working-class housing, will regard the Report as rather amateurish. The politicians responsible have done their best, but as soon as they have struck a real difficulty they have tried to conceal their inability to suggest a solution by vague words. Their recommendations will certainly cost a considerable amount of public money if they are carried into effect." (Municipal Journal, 11.8.33)

On the other hand Municipal Journal commented favourably on the Report's attention to management.

"In the future history of the housing developments of the 20th century Lord Moyne will receive an honoured place, because he and his Committee have at last emphasised the importance of management in dealing with working-class housing which can be reconditioned. The keynote of the whole report is trained management."

"The Moyne Committee attach great importance to the employment of properly trained house property managers, who may be either men or women." (Municipal Journal, 11.8.33)

SWHEM Bulletin quoted some of the recommendation on management in full.

"Employment of House Property Managers. We attach great importance to the employment, wherever practicable, of properly trained house property managers. We have no wish to exclude from this service the employment of trained men, but management on the Octavia Hill system involves assistance to the housewife in a number of different ways, and we think that it is therefore desirable that women housing estate managers should usually be employed. The right kind of woman manager has a special aptitude for this class of work. Moreover, it will be appreciated that visits to the home are usually made when the husband is away at work. The number of trained women managers is at present small, but we are informed that the supply is being deliberately restricted to the limited demand. If our proposals are adopted, the demand will be largely increased, and we understand that it will be possible to take immediate steps to increase the supply."

"Method of Operation...In all cases management should be based on the Octavia Hill system and, wherever practicable, Women Housing Estate Managers should be employed."

"Also, in Part VII, Summary of Conclusions, the management is thus emphasised: ...there has grown up in too many districts a bad tradition between landlord and tenant of this class of property. That tradition can, we think, only be cured by improved and enlightened management, and we see no practical way of securing this on a sufficiently large scale except by the acquisition of the properties. That management lies at the root of the problem is no new doctrine: it was preached and practised some seventy years ago by Octavia Hill." (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, October 1933)

The proposals for a national housing commission did not get a very good reception.

"To separate housing from the other powers of local Councils appears to the Minister analogous to asking an amputated leg to walk alone, and he maintains that the Ministry occupies its rightful position as the central co-ordinating authority." (Municipal Journal, 20.7.34)

These recommendations were rejected but the government proposed to bring in a bill (which became the 1935 Housing Act) to incorporate some of the other measures.

The comment in Municipal Journal was

"Local Authorities have been saved from a serious dislocation of their housing programme owing to the action of the Government in declining to accept the proposals put up by a self-constituted Committee in favour of a National Housing Commission."

"The Government have also decided to set up a strong Advisory Committee. All connected with local government will await with interest an announcement of the powers to be given to this Committee, and how far it will differ from the former Housing Council, established by Dr Addison in 1919, which passed away in 1921, unheard of and unsung. For the present, however, local authorities may be thankful that the Government have resisted the pressure to form a Housing Commission, and that they can proceed without hesitation or doubt with their plans for rehousing persons displaced by slum clearances." (Townroe, 1934)

Although the proposal was billed as one for a "strong advisory committee", the Central Housing Advisory Committee, which was set up by the 1935 Act, had very limited powers. Once again matters of housing management were left to the local authorities with some exhortation from central government; CHAC remained the only central government body active in housing management. Its first sub-committee, the Balfour Committee, set itself the task of looking at housing association and housing management and will be examined in Section 2.4.

#### 4.2.3 The Central Housing Advisory Committee and Women's Representation

The CHAC was set up in November 1935 under the chairmanship of Lord Balfour of Burleigh. It had a membership of 25 which included three women (Mrs M. M. Cooler, JP. "Labour representative", Miss Megan Lloyd George "MP for Anglesey" and the Countess of Limerick "formerly Chairman, Public Health Committee, Kensington Borough Council" (Ministry of Health, 1935a).

However, some women did not think this representation sufficient. In December 1935 a letter was sent from Lady Sanderson stating that

"A representative Housing Conference of Women's Societies (the third of its kind) has recently been held and I, as Chairman, have been instructed to write to you to ask if you will kindly receive a Deputation." (Sanderson, 1935)

The Women's Housing Conference had resolved

"...that a Women's Sub-Committee to the Central Advisory Committee under the new Housing Act should be appointed, and instructs the Chairman to arrange for a deputation to wait on the Minister of Health at the earliest opportunity." (Sanderson, 1935)

The Society of Women Housing Estate Managers was formally represented on this Housing Conference. Also at least seven of the housing associations represented had Society members; Mrs Barclay, "Surveyor to the St. Pancras Marylebone and Stepney Housing", and Miss Jeffrey, also prominent in the Society, were separately represented. So out of the 30 names mentioned there was a substantial connection with the Society (Sanderson, 1935).

The suggestion of representation was received without enthusiasm at the Ministry by the civil servant concerned.

"I presume that the Minister had better be advised to see this deputation as that course is likely to cause less trouble in the long run. Lady Sanderson was a member of the Women's Housing Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction Advisory Council... and her suggestion of what the proposed Women's Sub-Committee should do seems to be largely taken from the matters dealt with in the Report of the previous women's sub-committee ... I think there is no real justification whatever for suggesting that there is a special woman's point of view in relation to such planning matters as the internal fittings of a house etc..."

His correspondent wrote back in agreement

"There was also a Women's Sub-Committee of the short lived Advisory Council under the Housing Act... I was Secretary of it and see no reason for repeating the experiment." (Ministry of Health, 1935b)

The Minister seems to have been of the same mind.

Though the deputation took place, Mrs Barclay being one of the representatives, the Minister gave them grateful thanks but gave a bland answer, suggesting that the Conference should themselves set up a small sub-committee and he would be happy to arrange for co-operation and consultation between this sub-committee and a sub-committee of the Advisory Committee (Ministry of Health, 1936).

Although there were attempts to set up this consultation the results seem not to have been very fruitful. Some evidence from the Women's Advisory Housing Council, which was set up as a result of this consultation, was considered by the Balfour Committee, for example on playgrounds and gardens (Ministry of Health, 1938). But it does not seem to have had much influence. It is worth quoting the Balfour report's response to one of the items put forward by the committee.

"We were instructed, following a meeting of the Central Housing Advisory Committee held on 28th October 1937, to consider certain suggestions made by the Women's Advisory Housing Council for extending the amenities available for persons living in flats. The Council stated that working women were prejudiced against living in flats, their prejudice being due in part to the absence of proper places for the children to play; and that it would, moreover, be helpful if rest gardens were provided for the older people and, if space allowed, gardens which the tenants themselves could cultivate. The Council also referred to the general absence of window boxes on estates developed in flats. We should suppose that no local authority would wish to withhold from tenants' amenities of the kind indicated, but unfortunately it is a problem of

economics. Land in the centre of London and in the big cities is scarce and commands a very high price. Flat construction is therefore expensive. As every additional amenity must inevitably be reflected in additions to the rents, the cost of any scheme for building flats must be a limiting factor in the provision of extra amenities. A good deal can be accomplished by means of window boxes in improving the appearance of both the home and the street; and as the cost is not great, we recommend that local authorities be asked to give consideration to this matter." (CHAC, 1938: 34,35)

In this case the women might seem to have had better arguments on their side than the experts on the committee.

It is of interest to look at the full range of views in the memorandum submitted by the Special Committee of the Women's Housing Conference. The authors claimed that their concerns arose both from the experience of those employed on research in housing planning, and management and the experience of women who had run their own home. Among the matters they raised were better representation of women on local councils (using co-option if necessary) better consultation by local authorities with local women's organisations over new building, more provision for the larger family, old couples and single persons, better community provision on housing estates including churches, halls, nursery schools and shopping centres. Better internal planning and "research in sound proof walls and floors is much needed. The noise in working-class flats is distracting. (Special Committee of the Women's Housing Conference, 1936). Many of these issues reappear time and time again up to the present day.

The existence of the Women's Housing Conference and formation of the Women's Advisory Housing Council is of



interest because it indicates that there was some "community" of women's interest in housing which would to some extent also be supportive of SWHEM. The extent of this should not be exaggerated; the bodies represented on the Women's Housing Conference (Figure 4.1) have been carefully spelt out to look as many as possible and a number are very closely linked. Nevertheless it indicates that there were other groups of women who were interested in housing as well as in the employment issue. The history of the 1918 Women's Housing Sub-Committee has been traced by McFarlane (1984) but despite this continuing effort women's views remained under-represented.

#### 4.2.4 The Balfour Committee

The Balfour Committee was appointed in January 1936

"to consider, inter alia, the general question of the management of housing estates by local authorities with special reference to the employment of trained house managers" (CHAC, 1938).

Lord Balfour of Burleigh was chairman of the committee. He was also chairman of Kensington Housing Trust from its foundation to 1949 and thus a friend both of women housing managers and of housing association. His enthusiasm for housing was noted.

"In an endeavour to awaken South Kensington to the Lamentable conditions in North Kensington he would produce at a dinner party a matchbox full of bugs collected in North Kensington." (Brown, 1961)

The committee met 17 times and considered a variety of topics related to housing management and housing associations. A considerable amount of time was spent on the issue of bugs and disinfestation, also the furnishing

FIGURE 4.1

WOMEN'S HOUSING CONFERENCE  
List of Societies represented

1. Royal Institute of British Architects (Women's Committee)
2. Women Public Health Officers' Association
3. Society of Women Housing Estate Managers
4. Maternity and Child Welfare Council
5. National Federation of Women's Institutes
6. National Council of Women (Housing Committee)  
    "               "               "               (London Housing Committee)  
    "               "               "               (Household Management Committee)
7. London Labour Party (Women's Committee)
8. National Women's Liberal Federation
9. The Mothers' Union
10. Society of Friends (Industrial and Social Council)
11. Industrial Health Education Society
12. Association of Teachers of Domestic Science
13. Catholic Social Guild
14. Catholic Women's League (Westminster Branch)  
    "               "               "               (Northern Provinces)  
    "               "               "               (Birmingham Branch)
15. St. John's Social and Political Alliance
16. Guildhouse Women Citizens
17. National Women Citizens' Association
18. Fabian Group
19. International Scientific Management Congress  
    (Rural Sub-Committee, Domestic Section)
20. Church Army Housing
21. Westminster Housing Association
22. Westminster Housing Trust
23. Bethnal Green and East London Housing Association
24. Willesden Housing Association
25. Paddington Housing Council
26. Kensington Housing Trust
27. Lambeth Housing Movement
28. Southwark Housing Association
29. St. Marylebone Housing Association
30. Fulham Housing Association
31. Stepney Housing Trust
32. St. Pancras House Improvement Society
33. Islington and Finsbury Housing Association

Chairman:               The Lady Sanderson, J.P., 8 Sloane Gardens  
Vice-Chairman:       Mrs. de l'Hopital, O.B.E.  
Hon. Secretary:      Mrs. Liveing, 22 Queen Alexandra Mansions,  
                            Judd Street, W.C.1.

of working-class homes. But much time was given to considering housing management and taking evidence from interested organisations.

In April 1935 the committee heard that

"The Minister had recently received a deputation from the Institute of Housing Administration which was in a sense a rival body to the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers. though the methods and management advocated by the two bodies differed in certain important respects. The Institute has asked to be directly responsible on the Advisory Committee."

The sub-committee decided to ask both bodies to give evidence but SWHEM as "the older and better known body" to be asked to appear first (Balfour sub-committee minutes 22.4.35). Both bodies gave evidence and submitted written memoranda at the third and fourth meetings of the sub-committee. At its sixth meeting the committee considered memoranda on the system of management adopted by the Sutton Dwellings Trust, The Peabody Donation Fund and the LCC. It had decided to send a questionnaire to selected local authorities but subsequently decided that visits were also necessary. A short list was chosen to represent different types of management and a group of people to do the visits since Lord Balfour felt that "If the enquiry was to produce reliable results, continuity in the examination of houses was of first importance" (Balfour sub-committee minutes, 16.4.37). Arrangements were made for the visits and for the visiting committee to make their own selection of houses to be visited. At this stage also a Memorandum on the management of municipally owned houses was submitted by the Association of Municipal Corporations (Association

of Municipal Corporations, 1937)).

In considering the answers to the questionnaire, the committee noted the difficulty in comparing the costs of management without knowing local circumstances but used the questionnaire in selecting places to visit; Sheffield, for example, was chosen because its management costs were exceptionally low (Balfour sub-committee minutes 16.4.37).

The committee thus carried out the most thorough enquiry into housing management that was to occur for many years. Tenants' views, however, were little represented. There was a report from the Chairman and members of Hulme Tenant's Advisory Committee, which consisted of "persons interested in social matters in the Hulme area" and was formed to "act as a link between the Corporation and the tenants of the Hulme Clearance Areas" (Hulme Tenant's Advisory Committee, 1937).

But this was exceptional. Despite the fact that the Balfour investigation was largely an official view, it is clear that the evidence from the visits at least convinced the committee that housing management in some local authorities was in need of improvement. But it also considered the specific question of who should manage these estates.

#### Views on housing management and the women's role

It is interesting to note the range of views and practices of housing management revealed by the evidence

to the Balfour Committee and its visits. The Society of Housing Managers' evidence gave prominence to the idea of housing management as an integrated function with the services affecting tenants, and visiting them, being carried out by one trained person - and emphasised the suitability of women for this work (Balfour sub-committee minutes 30.7.36; Thompson, 1936).

The Institute of Housing identified different types of housing officials with different ranges of duties. It also argued for training for the work and outlined the Institute's new examination scheme. Under the heading of "welfare work", to assist the housing manager in his duties, it advocated the appointment of a woman welfare worker.

"It is considered advantageous that she lives on an estate and must possess very definite qualifications, be of the motherly or matronly type with a definite love of welfare work... She is, therefore, always available to render all the assistance that lies in her power by closely co-operating with the Doctor, District Nurse...and other services." (Institute of Housing, 1936)

The stereotype of women's role can be seen in full force in these arguments.

Evidence from the Peabody Trust described the "resident superintendent" model of housing management based on the use of ex-servicemen which they had used from the beginning (Agate, 1936). Evidence from local authorities showed a variety of arrangements, ranging from large bureaucratic systems such as Manchester's, control being split between different departments such as Cardiff, even to the use of agents for housing management. This latter practice did not however meet with the approval of the

committee or of the Ministry of Health (Howes, 1937).

#### The Balfour Report and its effects

The Balfour committee published a report which was commended to local authorities in Ministry of Health Circular 1740 October 1938 (Ministry of Health 1938).

The Minister accepted the committee's recommendations with some reservations and commented

"The Minister has no intention of suggesting the employment of one sex to the exclusion of the other on house management, but it does not appear to him that there are any functions involved which cannot adequately be performed by women of the right training and character.

"In reviewing this matter, a local authority should consider whether the number of their houses is sufficient to call for the employment of a whole-time manager. Where a whole-time manager could with advantage be employed, the Minister sees no reason to dissent from the suggestions made in the Report as to the kind of qualifications and characteristics for which they should look in any officer to be appointed for this purpose."

The Report, after discussing the need for "social education" for some tenants had come to the conclusion that women were best fitted for this kind of social work and that the same person should have contact with slum tenants before rehousing and after. While avoiding any rigid system they came to the conclusion that the combination of "social" work and rent collection or repair ordering was a good thing as it gave a good pretext for entry into the house, but they did not insist that all these functions be combined (CHAC, 1938: 28).

The Report did, however, reject the Institute of Housing's view that there was no need to bring the rehousing officer into early contact with the slum tenant. The committee also directed attention to these managers having the right training as well as the right

personality and listed "sociological" subjects which they thought should form the basis for the training of all managers in this respect and which included such subjects as unemployment and other benefits, rent and wages, community centres. They went on to itemise the technical subjects which should also be included and concluded "Women trained on this basis would be of value to the housing department of a local authority and should be adequately paid..." (CHAC 1938: 29).

The Report's recommendations went too far for some people and not far enough for others. The Municipal Journal commented that the report would be "generally welcomed" by local authorities and spelt out the sub-committee's recommendations on the employment of trained women (Municipal Journal, 18.11.38).

However, the decidedly cautious endorsement of the circular was clearly less than the Society would have hoped for. The attention given by the report to housing management and its endorsement of the need for trained staff was helpful. The Society's Annual report for 1938-1939 stressed this aspect, and the way in which the syllabus was being adapted to the recommendations of the Balfour report. It quoted the Ministry Circular's somewhat tepid endorsement of the employment of women managers without comment (SWHEM, 1939: 7). Unfortunately by November 1938 the growing threat of war was already beginning to overshadow longer term plans for the improvement of the service (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, April 1939). Power (1987) considers that the Balfour

Report on the whole favoured the Society's approach over that of the Institute. "However, it failed to make clear cut recommendations on many key issues." (Power, 1987: 33)

#### 4.3 THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN HOUSING MANAGERS

##### 4.3.1 Local Authorities and slum clearance

Prior to 1930, although the local authorities had been empowered to carry out slum clearance, government had not effectively pressed them to do so. Up to 1930, about 11,000 slum houses had been pulled down and replaced (Bowley, 1945: 137).

The legislation of the 1930s, as we have seen, changed this situation by encouraging local authorities to concentrate on slum clearance and demanding plans from them. Table 4.1 shows the progress made under the various Acts and the fairly abrupt decline of general purpose building from 1935 onwards together with the increase in building for slum clearance and decrowding.

TABLE 4.1

NUMBERS OF HOUSES BUILT IN ENGLAND AND WALES  
BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES 1931 - 1939 (Thousands)

Year ending 31 March	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
1923 & 24 Acts (general purpose)	52.5	65.2	48.5	44.8	11.1	-	-	-	-
1930, 36 & 38 Acts (slum clearance)	-	2.4	6.0	9.0	23.4	39.1	54.7	56.8	74.1
1930, 36 & 38 Acts (decrowding)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	7.3	14.3
1925, 36 & 38 Acts (general)	3.4	2.5	1.4	2.2	5.7	14.4	15.1	13.9	12.5
TOTAL	55.9	70.1	55.9	56.0	40.2	53.5	71.8	78.0	100.9

Source: Bowley (1945)



The small amount of slum clearance carried out prior to the 1930s meant that only a few local authorities had substantial experience of slum clearance work. Most had very little. A memorandum by Parker Morris published by the National Housing Planning Council in 1931 was intended to point out to local authorities the implication of this change. It incidentally casts revealing light on the kind of tenants housed under the earlier Acts and the attitude to slum clearance tenants. In it Parker Morris pointed out that local authorities had ten years experience in providing houses, but were likely to encounter new problems in rehousing tenants from slum areas.

"In selecting tenants for their existing housing estates Local Authorities have been able to exercise considerable discretion, with the result that they have secured a more or less high grade of tenant. The rents charged for the new houses, being a good deal higher than the general rents for working-class property, have also tended to restrict the tenants to the better paid section of the community.

"The tenants of the houses to be erected to replace the slums will be those residing in the slums. Many, in fact a large majority, of these families have a fairly high sense of self-respect and house pride, but a proportion (maybe 10 per cent) have little or none. Some of them are irregular in their employment and notoriously thriftless: they are apt to get behind with their rents and, if given the chance to pile up hopeless arrears.

"Local Authorities have generally refused accommodation in their new houses for these bad tenants but, if they are living on the slum area to be cleared, they will have to be found accommodation by the Local Authority and, for lack of other houses, they must usually be moved to new houses or flats.

"The influence of such a comparatively small number of dirty, destructive, rowdy and thriftless tenants is out of all proportion to their number. They not only allow their own houses to become dirty and untidy, but they may cause serious damage to the fences, trees and grass margins. They are apt to cause rowdiness on the estate and to provoke dissension generally amongst their neighbours. As a result, the estate may get a bad name which may take

years to outlive."

(Parker Morris, 1931: 2)

Parker Morris went on to argue for the employment of "Octavia Hill trained Women" to deal with these problems. We have seen in the previous Chapter how women housing managers had been employed in cases where local authorities had felt there were "problems" arising from their estates and some of these were slum clearance estates. It seems reasonable to hypothesise therefore that the swing to slum clearance in the 1930s might provide further opportunities for the employment of women managers.

The discussions and reports to the Balfour Committee, for example the AMC's, do reveal a clear distinction being made between slum clearance and other tenants (Association of Municipal Corporations, 1937). Detailed local studies by Ryder (1984) and Dresser (1984) have shown that this situation could vary locally but confirm the increased need for attention to the rehousing of slum dwellers in the 1930s. Power (1987) briefly examines the LCC system and its slum clearance work. She argues that the hopes of the women that the stress on welfare work generated by slum clearance would lead to a greater integration of welfare and housing management were not fulfilled (Power, 1987: 30).

#### 4.3.2 Progress in employment in the 1930s

In Figure 4.2 an overall summary is given of available information on local authorities and associations where women housing managers were employed in the 1930s.

FIGURE 4.2

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS EMPLOYING WOMEN MANAGERS

<u>1931 or earlier*</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1933</u>	<u>1934</u>
<u>Local Authorities</u>			
Bebington (1928)	Brighton	Paddington Borough	Bootle
Bromborough	Cambridge	Council	Chelsea
Chester (1928)	Newcastle under Lyme		Croydon
Chesterfield (1927)	Tunbridge Wells		Lancaster
Cheltenham (1929)			Lincoln
Kensington			Tonbridge
Leeds (1929)			Tynemouth
St. Pancras			Bognor Regis
Stockton			Brentford & Chiswick
Walsall			
West Bromwich			
Westminster (1930)			
Rotherham (1928)			
Hendon (1929)			
Norwich (1929)			
LCC (1931)			
<u>Housing Associations etc.</u>			
Birmingham Copec	Bethnal Green and East	Aubrey Trust	Kensington Housing Trust
Improved Tenements	London Housing Ass.	Liverpool Improved	National Model Dwellings
Association	Cambridge Housing	Homes Ltd.	Co. Ltd.
Church Commissioners	Society	Shoreditch H.A.	Newcastle on Tyne House
Crown Commissioners	Westminster Housing Trust		Improvement Trust Ltd.
Manchester Housing	United Women's Homes Ltd		Pilkington Bros
(1926)			Cape Town

\*Date of first appointment has been added where this is known.

Cont.

FIGURE 4.2 (Cont.)

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS EMPLOYING WOMEN MANAGERS

<u>1935</u>	<u>1936</u>	<u>1937</u>	<u>1938</u>	<u>1939</u>
<u>Local Authorities</u>				
Westhoughton	Abingdon Hastings Mitcham Islington	Southall Swansea Winchester Hemel Hempstead	Aylesbury Fulham Stirlingshire C.C. Halesowen	Battersea Romford St. Albans Sowerby Bridge Utttoxeter
<u>Housing Associations etc.</u>				
	Chelsea Housing Improvement Society Isle of Dogs Housing Society Duchy of Cornwall Leeds Housing Trust Oxford Cottage Improvement Society Paddington Houses Swaythling Housing Society, Southampton Thistle Property Trust, Stirling Willesden Housing Society	Battersea H.A. Church Army Housing (Gateshead)	Messrs. Clutton North Eastern Housing Association  East London Johannesburg	Fulham Housing Improvement Society Ltd.  Port Elisabeth Sydney N.S.W.

The most common source of this information is the Society's annual reports, which carried a list of new appointments. This has been supplemented by appointments mentioned in journal articles and letters and SWHEM Minutes. There are some sources of inaccuracy in this information. Sometimes a place is mentioned twice when the appointment is temporary in the first instance. More importantly the 1936 Annual Report was the first to contain a full list of members, so appointments prior to that date are only picked up from letters or journal articles or minutes. Also the appointments do not usually mention the extent of the responsibility; a women manager might only be responsible for some of the properties.

Despite its deficiencies the list does give some idea of the spread of employment. While the distribution of employing authorities may seem arbitrary, appointments often came about through personal contacts, meeting and publications. The spread of employment was fairly slow, however, compared with the total number of housing authorities: 1,716 in 1934 (Municipal Journal, 16.3.34). However, many authorities would not have had sufficient houses to justify the appointment of a housing manager and progress on such appointments was fairly slow in general. Even by 1936 it was estimated that only 17% of housing authorities had a housing department at all (Institute of Housing, 1936). Not all authorities were convinced of the need to take any action about managing their property; those who did might have objections to women either in employment at all or as managers. Others might employ women but not give them authority over all

the estates.

Chapter Three Section 3.4 showed that, in the case of Chesterfield, Miss Upcott was appointed to manage a particularly difficult estate for the local authority while the rest of the property was managed by a man. This dual system of having the more "difficult" (i.e. often slum clearance estates) managed on the "Octavia Hill system" while the more "respectable" ones were managed in a less intensive way seems to have happened in a number of cases. Without intensive work on local records it is not possible to tell exactly in how many cases this happened or how long it lasted.

The dual system was initially in operation at Rotherham, for example. Jean Thompson, after she had transferred to Southall, wrote

"When I first accepted the post of Housing Estates Manager to Southall, the astonishment at Rotherham was complete - why should anyone give up a job with 2,700 odd houses to take on 775 in a place no one had ever heard of?... It is a more satisfactory feeling than I can adequately express to have the opportunity of co-ordinating all the work concerned with housing administration, instead of dividing the management with an untrained and hostile man as in my previous post. It is recognised in Southall that the Housing Estates Manager should be a Chief Officer of the Council with direct access to the Committee and real responsibility for the administration like any other chief officer.

"At the time when I started the Rotherham work early in 1928, the whole idea of women's management was that we had to be content to begin in a small way with responsibility for only a section of the houses. The division of management, however, made the whole system insecure and decreased the efficiency of the administration especially as the work grew. The unanimous decision of the Rotherham Council to appoint my successor has now re-affirmed the policy of employing trained women to manage the majority of the houses and probably it is only a matter of time before complete unification comes. The opportunity for real co-ordination of management

in Southall. from the start, convinces me, however, that we should go extremely carefully in the future about taking 'compromise' appointments, except possibly with the very large local authorities." (Thompson, 1938)

It is easy to see how the situation described could easily become one of rivalry, with both the people "in charge" of housing fearing for their jobs.

In 1933 Municipal Journal commented

"Municipalities appear to be in two minds with regard to the employment of women house property managers. Some, like Birmingham and Bristol, believe that women of the workaday type are extremely valuable as managers of municipal property, but not as collectors of rents. Mr Parker Morris, both at Chesterfield, and now as Town Clerk of Westminster, has been a steadfast supporter of women managers trained on the Octavia Hill system. The report of M.R. Baskett, the present woman manager in Westminster, was published recently, and is of general interest to those responsible for municipal housing... The Report indicates that proper management can raise the standard of tenants, even those transferred from homes that were legally or socially overcrowded."

[This note also draws attention to the special difficulties of working-class flats and the role of management in relation to these.] (Municipal Journal, 24.11.33).

How should the progress, or lack of it, in women's employment in housing be assessed overall. It could be argued, from looking at the list in Figure 4.2, that the progress made was very creditable. 48 local authorities were, by this list, employing women managers. But two factors have to be borne in mind. The first is that the list included some local authorities where women managers were employed under the "dual system" and subsequently another type of management prevailed - Leeds, as we shall

show in the next Section, is an example of this. The second factor to be borne in mind is that there were 1,716 local authorities. It is true that some of these authorities did not have a big enough programme to employ a separate staff or did not feel inclined to do so. But others were employing a different type of housing staff. In particular the big authorities such as Birmingham, Manchester and the LCC were in the hands of predominantly male staff. (Manchester employed its first woman assistant in 1929 but in such departments women rarely reached the higher posts.) (See next Section.)

So from the formative period of the 1930s women did not seem to be appointed to the largest authorities. On the other hand, in 1939 the Quarterly Bulletin claimed that "Women housing managers serve metropolitan boroughs containing nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the population of London." (H.G.L.A. 1939). The London boroughs did have severe housing problems and were fairly prestigious appointments though many of the departments were still fairly small or had only limited powers.

The boroughs mentioned seem to be St. Pancras, Westminster, Paddington, Chelsea, Brentford and Chiswick, Islington, Southall, Battersea and Kensington. Figure 4.2 also shows that Society members made progress in the housing associations. Here they were more likely to have overall control although committee members might play a very active part. Once again, however, the largest housing Trusts - Guinness, Sutton and Peabody - had predominantly male staff and were committed to the Institute of housing (interviews with Institute members).



The smaller housing associations formed only a tiny part of the country's housing stock, though there were some doing pioneering work in fields such as rehabilitation. On a comparative basis, at the point when they gave evidence to the Balfour Committee in 1936, the Society had 143 qualified members, 62 of whom worked for municipal employers and 72 for non-municipal employers. The Institute of Housing had a membership of 261 but "not limited to officials engaged in local government nor to housing managers as such". Borough Treasurers and Medical Officers of Health responsible for housing were accepted. Of these 262, 78 were Chief Housing Officers; there were three women members (Institute of Housing, 1936) (SWHEM, 1936).

On the face of this evidence the Institute of Housing members had already made more headway than the Society members, particularly in the local authorities, though neither body was very strong in relation to the number of authorities which had responsibility for housing. So the gains made by women housing managers were strictly limited. But throughout the 1930s they had faced considerable difficulties even in making this limited progress. The next Section illustrates this by looking at some of the disputes which occurred and the arguments which were used. The arguments are quite illuminating and examples therefore given of disputes in Leeds, The London County Council, Liverpool, a more general controversy in the Municipal Journal, as well as comments by the interviewees themselves.

Power claims that "by the late 1930s only 75 of its members were actually employed on council estates. Between them they were covering 35,000 properties, just under 500 properties each, and less than 5% of the total council stock." (Power, 1987: 31).

The Society's membership statistics, analysed in detail in the next Chapter, show 375 members by 1939, but do not detail employment.

#### 4.3.3 Disputes over the employment of women managers in local authorities

##### Leeds

Leeds was one of the the places where Octavia Hill workers had been appointed to deal with only part of the stock. In 1929 a housing manager and two assistants were appointed to look after older property in the Quarry Hill area, along with part of the Middleton Estate. The appointment of the women was attacked by Councillor O'Donnell (Leeds Weekly Citizen 7.6.29).

"Councillor O'Donnell strongly protested against this proposal, which he described as ridiculous and objectionable. It was a waste of public money to appoint these ladies to do work which could be done at less cost by clerks from the City Treasurer's Department. Rent collectors need not be university graduates. The fact was that these ladies were being appointed not only to collect rents but to do a little "slumming," to kiss the babies and quote Shakespeare and teach people how to sneeze by numbers! The idea was an insult to poor people; it was the working of the provincial lower middle class mind placed in authority. People in East Leeds, where it was proposed to dump these ladies, would resent the scheme."

The work in Leeds was therefore started in an atmosphere

of criticism and it seems that the circumstances gradually became more difficult.

Further Society members were appointed: "Miss Brian, Assistant at Leeds" (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, July 1933) and "Miss Hall, Chief Assistant, Leeds" (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, April 1934). But Leeds started to build up to a large slum clearance programme (Ravetz, 1974: Chapter 2 & 3). In 1934 the Council appointed a Housing Director, Mr R. Livett RIBA, who had held a senior post at Manchester (Ravetz 1974).

At an SWHEM Council meeting Miss Marshall reported on her experience of these events. The "watertight" Octavia Hill department which had previously existed had been abolished.

"Miss Marshall gave an account of her present position at Leeds, because she felt that as the appointment of a new assistant was pending (due to the resignation of Miss Brian) we should know something of the situation. There is now one Housing Department at Leeds, under a recently appointed Housing Director who was formerly at Manchester. Miss Marshall and a male colleague work in the Rent Collecting section of the Department, which consists at present of twenty collectors and three trainees - men and women - and between them collect the rents of all the Council houses in Leeds. Until June 1934 Miss Marshall was responsible for a "watertight" Octavia Hill Department, but now that is abolished. There are two other departments in the Management Section of the New Housing Department dealing with accounts and lettings, these being separated from the Rent Collecting Department: these two do more or less mechanical work, and Miss Marshall retains considerable control over the 6,000 houses which are under her, especially for repairs and allotment of accommodation. The main causes for dissatisfaction are as follows: first, that Miss Brian and Miss Reeve are not working under Miss Marshall, but under her colleague, and get no opportunity for doing Octavia Hill work; and secondly, all the rent collectors have too much collecting to do, the numbers varying from 160 to 230 tenancies per day, for three days a week. The reorganisation is so recent the Miss Marshall preferred to give no opinion as to the future of the work in Leeds. The council decided to circularise the appointment in the usual way, when the advertisement appears.

Although our workers are not able to do Octavia Hill work at present, it was agreed that the position there should not yet be abandoned, as it may in time improve." (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, July 1934)

This was reported a little more strongly in the Society's minutes.

"The Chairman reported on recent developments in Leeds. Agreed that if the post of rent collector which Miss Brian had resigned...is advertised it be circulated amongst members with an indication that there is a crisis in Leeds and that the right type of applicant is urged to apply." (SWHEM Minutes, 14.7.34)

In 1935 there was a report:

"There are now three Senior Rent Collectors in Leeds, each in charge of a Tenancy Section (the total number of houses controlled is approximately 12,000). Of these three, two are Octavia Hill trained women, Miss Marshall and Miss Hall. The other is a man."

After this point, mention of employment in Leeds in the Society's records lapses (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, April 1935).

#### The London County Council

Power (1987) gives a brief survey of the development of housing management in the LCC. They had appointed a Director of Housing in 1919 at a high salary. [In fact, the LCC had a Housing Manager for some years before that (LCC, 1908)]. Building had largely concentrated on low rise outer estates and these had been managed by resident superintendents. The model of management used was in fact similar to that used by Peabody and some of the other large trusts and seems likely to have been modelled on them. (There is a good discussion of the LCC and other management methods in the Balfour Sub-Committee minutes for example.)

Power considers that the LCC were tied to the logic of large estates with one resident superintendent managing 2,000 dwellings. When changes of policy in the late 1920s increased the number of poorer tenants and renewed emphasis on flat-building in the inner areas, the lack of a coherent management system produced problems. The LCC therefore decided in 1930 to employ women housing managers with responsibility for door-to-door rent collection, repairs, cleaning, tenancy matters and court action.

"However, the LCC only sustained the intensive system for a few years and on a few estates, with the appointment of one woman manager and two female assistants in 1930. It reacted defensively and narrowly to the Government's report." (Balfour Report) (Power, 1907: 37)

Power comments that the LCC argued that the Octavia Hill system was too staff intensive and expensive, but in fact the LCC had a very intensive staff ratio, and could certainly have integrated local management if it wanted (Power, 1987: 38).

She does not, however, identify some of the other factors which caused the LCC to reject the "Octavia Hill" approach and the employment of women, and which are revealed in correspondence in "London Town", the journal of the LCC staff association. It began with an article by "Maria Brown" (who in a later correspondence dubs herself "an honest feminist").

The article "Slums and Social Service" (Brown, 1936) discussed the development of housing management, the

official recommendations about the need for trained managers (in the Moyne Report) and advocated the employment of Octavia Hill trained managers, while stressing that estate management was and should be a career for both sexes and commenting on the need for municipal management of houses. This quite low key article provoked a violent response in the article on the management of housing estates by an R. J. Fowler in the February 1936 issue. He argued that "The article, of course, was propaganda in favour of the Octavia Hill system of estate management, and was by implication a criticism of the London County Council's method of administration".

Moreover, under a title of "Unpractical Spinsters" he introduced some sexist arguments.

"In connection with repairs, a woman is usually at a disadvantage in executing minor repairs herself and dealing with work under her supervision...

"The basic argument used in favour of the Octavia Hill system is that women possess peculiar advantages for social service. Actually, the type of woman attracted to housing administration as a career is usually not the ideal conceived by 'Maria Brown', but a spinster with limited practical experience of household management...

"Very strong opinions have been expressed by tenants of the Council against the employment of women and the visitation of their homes by them. There is no lack of confidence in the present male staff employed, most of whom are married and have their own domestic problems.

"It is not without significance that, though the Council some years ago appointed two women housing managers experimentally (one of whom has voluntarily resigned), no others have been appointed...

"When women entered the service of the Council as housing superintendents there were many estate clerks, who were loyal officers, well qualified by experience and training, and who were members of technical institutes, who were waiting for promotion to the rank of superintendent. In order to be consistent, the Staff Association must be most

insistent that, if women are considered for estate management, they must at least begin as junior estate clerks."

(Fowler, 1936)

Such arguments were well rebutted by Maria Brown (pointing out that she had said that housing management should be open to both sexes and that "trained" women were referred to), and Margaret Mackenzie in the March 1936 issue.

"With regard to supervision of repair work, most workmen carry out intelligent instructions willingly, and are much more influenced by the efficiency and application to duty of the officer in charge than by the sex.

"The fact that the second woman superintendent to be appointed by the Council left the service to take up a more congenial housing appointment which offered more scope for her ideals can scarcely be used as an argument against further employment of women as housing superintendents. There is no antagonism against men, but women would welcome the opportunity of working side by side with men under equal conditions in estate management as in other branches of the Council's service." (MacKenzie, 1936).

But Maria Brown and Margaret Mackenzie indicate only too well the difficulties which women had to face, particularly when they were seeking to enter the more senior jobs. The principle of equal pay was not yet generally accepted though gaining considerable headway in Parliament. The LCC still had a marriage bar (standing order 290 provided that the marriage of any woman in the service of the Council shall put an end to her contract of employment and prohibited the recruitment of married women to the service). (London Town, 1936).

In November 1936 the Staff Association had held a referendum on the question of the retention of women in

the service after marriage and the result was:			
	Men	Women	Total
In favour	312	305	617
Against	1,218	247	1,465

After discussion of the issue, the General Committee rejected a recommendation that the marriage bar be abolished. The referendum and the vote very clearly indicated where the power lay, and whose interests were being considered (London Town, 1936). So women in employment could be attacked as unpractical spinsters, while the marriage bar simultaneously precluded them progressing to senior post in employment.

It is of interest that some of the letters subsequently written to London Town by women protesting against this decision were written under pseudonyms. For example, "Felis Domesticus" (1936), "Una E Minimus" (1936), and "Subject" (1936).

Even this expression of real fear of the women was used as a basis for attacking them. A letter in the same edition stated "It is particularly pleasing to see that Mr Hoare does not seek refuge behind a nom de plume, as do so many of the near males who contribute letters and articles to your journal." The unpleasantness which is indicated in such remarks gives ample reason why an educated woman who had a choice would seek to take up "more congenial housing appointment" than the LCC.

#### The Liverpool dispute

In 1935, Liverpool Housing Committee appointed Jean



Thompson (a SWHEM member and at the time managing property for Rotherham) to the post of Superintendent of lettings. Later the appointment was rescinded by the whole council on the grounds that she would be in charge of men (SWHEM Minutes 19.5.35). This sparked off a controversy which reveals many of the attitudes prevalent at the time.

Sir Gerald Hurst in Parliament asked the Minister of Health "whether he is aware of this incident.". The Minister (Sir H. Young) replied

"my attention has not previously been drawn to this matter. The selection of any officer in any particular instance is within the discretion of the appointing authority, but in the last two annual reports of the Ministry of Health the attention of the local authorities was drawn to the importance of the appointment of properly qualified officers for house management, and I propose to include some further observations on this issue in an early circular letter."

Viscountess Astor asked

"Does not the right honourable gentleman think that this is a job which can better be done by a qualified woman than a man?"

Mr Buchanan commented

"Nonsense."

(Municipal Journal, 17.5.35).

(Sir Gerald Hurst was the father of Margaret Hurst, later Margaret Hill who was trained with SWHEM and later became the first woman housing manager in South Africa and the first Housing Management advisor at the Ministry of Health).

The question was not discussed further in Parliament but a lively series of articles and letters ensued in Municipal Journal. In May 1935 Eleanor Rathbone MP, who

had been a member of Liverpool City Council for 25 years, wrote an article entitled "A woman's view of the Local Government Service" in which she used the action by Liverpool as an illustration of the general attitudes of local authorities.

"Many councils scarcely recruit women at all except for routine clerical work and for special posts in the educational and health service which only women can fill. Even when there is no formal bar against women and girls as competitors they are often in practice excluded.

"There is no justification for a sex impediment in filling municipal posts. It is unjust to women, who pay their full share of rates and taxes; and it is not in the interests of the services, which should aim solely at recruiting those candidates who are best qualified on their individual merits... Many administrative posts call in fact for qualities in which women are, by tradition, supposed to excel, such as an intuitional knowledge of character, tact in handling subordinates, thrift and economy, meticulous attention to detail, and, above all, knowledge of and imaginative sympathy with those who are suffering from diseases, poverty, bad housing conditions, unemployment etc. It is not a mere metaphor to say that local administration is like housekeeping on a large scale and calls for much the same qualities." (Rathbone, 1935).

Despite the pressure no change was made at Liverpool.

### Controversy in the Municipal Journal

In September 1935 an article entitled "Housing Management is 'Ideally Women's Work'" appeared in Municipal Journal, based on a conference paper given by Miss Emily Murray, a senior member of the Society. After outlining the history and growth of employment of women in housing management it stated:

"Miss Hill began her experiment with three houses. In 1912 (the year of her death) she directly controlled over 2,000 tenancies. Women managers, trained on her system, are now in control of more than 33,000 tenancies and an annual rental of over £1,000,000. In London the Ecclesiastical Commissioners own 2,500 of the tenancies and the Crown Lands Commissioners about 2,000. Private owners and housing trusts have placed more than

6,000 tenancies under trained management. But the most notable development of the last ten years has been among the local authorities; 46 women managers are now employed by them, controlling over 23,000 tenancies, and the number is steadily increasing. In London, the Chelsea, Kensington and Westminster Councils have decided in favour of this form of control, and the London County Council has 550 of its tenancies under a woman manager."

The article went on to argue the case for women's employment in housing.

"Trained management is proving itself, and those who realise its value generally recognise that it is ideally women's work. The working-class woman conducts the business of the home in her husband's daily absence. The woman manager starts with a working knowledge of the difficulties inherent in housework (a bond of sympathy at the outset) and, in pursuit of her duties, she will find many points of contact and many opportunities of enlarging the scope of her work to the mutual advantage of tenant and landlord."

After outlining the scope of duties included in housing management the article concluded.

"Enough has been said to indicate the ever growing scope of duty and opportunity for the modern woman housing estate manager. There is an overwhelming need for enlightened management of working-class houses, and the present time seems a peculiarly fitting one for considering the contribution that can be made by managers trained on the Octavia Hill system." (Municipal Journal, 6.9.35)

It is not surprising that this article provoked a response from the men employed in housing work. An article by Ernest France, "Chairman of the Rent Collectors and Investigators, Manchester", vigorously refuted some of the arguments in the preceding article.

"It has been stated recently in the columns of this journal that trained women managers control 23,000 municipal houses; but that gives us only a glimpse of the vast field of municipal housing operations. There must be several hundreds of technically qualified officers in the service of local authorities with ten, twelve and even sixteen years' experience of municipal administration.

"Moreover, during the past sixteen years great numbers of juniors have been gaining valuable experience in this work. It must not be assumed,

therefore, that the municipalities to-day are entirely lacking, so far as their own staffs are concerned, in ability and experience.

"It would be a misfortune if, in our anxiety to obtain the best results, we overlooked the fact that the bulk of the pioneer work has been done by men trained in the hard school of experience. Some of these men will have made mistakes, but great numbers of them, working quietly, enthusiastically and under tremendous handicaps, have achieved success. They have found the right way, and many of them, to the writer's knowledge, are ready to endorse the methods and principles of the late Miss Octavia Hill.

"It must be remembered also that Miss Octavia Hill had no experience of modern municipal estates, and that she strenuously opposed the idea of "Municipal Landlordism". It is hardly fair, therefore, to attribute to her the idea that women alone are capable of efficiently managing modern municipal estates."

He went on to suggest that men might have some advantages over women in the work.

"Those of us who have had this experience have found that men have certain advantages in estate supervision particularly in regard to disputes between tenants; and the argument that only a woman can know what is right or wrong about a house is one which would be disputed even by many working women. It is probably true also that a housewife would more readily accept a suggestion or reprimand from a man." (France, 1935)

Although France concluded with a call for housing management to be an "open-sex occupation" and for the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers and the Institute of Housing Administration to work together, his article was seen as an attack on the position of the women.

Margaret Miller, who was by then Secretary of the Society, replied on their behalf.

"It is possible that Mr France's recent article... may have conveyed a somewhat misleading impression to the minds of your readers, particularly in relation to the question of pioneer work in housing management.

"Without wishing to belittle in any way the work done by men in the field of housing management during the post-war period, there can be no doubt that it was a woman, Miss Octavia Hill, who discovered the right approach to house property management as long ago as 1864, and it is by women that the principles of expert and enlightened management have been developed since that date. This is not to deny that men have successfully adapted and applied Miss Hill's methods and that men may make a valuable contribution to the solution of housing management problems in the future.

"But we do claim that the profession of housing estate management is and will remain one for which women, by reason of character and temperament, are specially well adapted and in which, given the requisite training, they are able to do specially valuable work."

(Miller, 1935)

In the same issue, another member of the Society, Irene Hort, spelt out the arguments in more detail as she saw them.

"But where women have the pull over men is in management that brings them into close contact with the tenants, such contact as is maintained by the collection of rents - it is an important principle of the Octavia Hill System that rent collection should form the pivot of the managers' work, and that rent collection and social or welfare work among the tenants should be combined with the technical and administrative side, such as repairs and letting.

"It is on the side of their human relationships with the tenants that women have the greatest natural advantages over men. Not only do they take a greater interest in such details as furnishings and fittings, cooking, cleaning, clothes, children's feeding, etc., on which the housewives may welcome friendly advice or discussion, but they are by temperament more interested in people for their own sakes, and they bring the personal touch into all their work more readily than most men.

"The 'attributes of the earnest social worker' are, I believe, commoner among women than men, though, of course it would be foolish to deny that they exist in men also. It may be true that a housewife would more readily accept a suggestion or reprimand from a man, but it is unquestionably true that she would more readily confide her personal and domestic troubles to another woman." (Hort, 1935)

The war of words was continued by letter from L. W. Mascall, Housing Welfare Officer, Dudley, saying that he "would be the last to belittle in any way the fine work accomplished by women housing managers". He nevertheless made a rousing statement against them:

"I do seriously suggest, however, that their enthusiasm is liable to blind them to the very obvious natural disadvantages they experience by reason of their status in private life, apart from official existence.

"Far from having a pull over a man, it will be found that when a conscientious male housing official enters a home where ordinary relations are normal, he straight away finds himself on common ground, and although it is not the practice of male officials to emphasise this important point, it must not be too lightly discounted." (Mascall, 1935a)

Mascall's statement could not of course go unchallenged and was answered in turn by a letter from Jean Thompson.

"Sir, - In answer to Mr Mascall's letter on this subject in your issue of November 22. I would say that all spheres of work in the public service should be open-sex occupations. If so, it would be found that women had a special aptitude for housing estate management, just as men have, for example, for certain branches of technical work. In both cases, there is no reason why a minority of exceptional people of the other sex should not do useful work if they are fitted for it.

"Such a complete freedom of entry to all branches of the service for both sexes would secure a natural adjustment of interest, the best use of qualifications and the highest level of service for the community. But this is not the case at present. The public service is full of examples of occupations which are virtually and for all practical purposes, if not in the realms of abstract theory or Council resolution, closed-sex occupations - closed to qualified women.

"No doubt the men who are so anxious to define housing as an open-sex occupation would agree that the principle should be extended to the other branches. Until it is, it must continue to be emphasised that women as such and by virtue of higher education and specialised training, have special qualifications for housing management, both in the larger and smaller areas and not only in subordinate positions. Further, they did the pioneer work in calling attention to the importance of the administrative side of housing. It is surely

very recently that men have begun to talk about social administration in housing and the prevention of future slums.

"The meaning of Mr Mascall's rather peculiar reference to the 'natural disadvantages' of women by reason of their status in private life is a little obscure. Possibly he means to allude to the fact that the majority of professional women are single. In answer to this it can be said:

"1. that by no means the whole of the men engaged in housing administration are married. It is extremely common to find that much of the work involving direct contacts with the tenants, which is regarded by some men as relatively unskilled and subordinate, is done by young, inexperienced, single, male collectors.

"2. Housing Management could and should be open to married as well as single women. It is largely the marriage bar, still almost universal in the service, which prevents this.

"3. Even single women housing managers are quick to notice details affecting the home and have an interest in human problems from an angle which is at least unusual in the male official."

(Thompson, 1935).

Miss Jeffery herself weighed in on 27th December to correct a false impression:

"Sir. - I am reluctant to prolong a correspondence which has revealed so much misunderstanding about the trained and organised work of women in housing estate management; but there is one sentence in Mr Mascall's letter in your issue of December 13 which should not, I think, be allowed to pass unchallenged.

"Mr Mascall says that Miss Hill's 'methods were evolved in collaboration with...John Ruskin'. I do not know how Mr Mascall can have come to such a conclusion, because it is entirely opposed to the facts of Ruskin's association in the work as recorded by his and Miss Hill's friends. Ruskin had nothing whatever to do with the methods of management put into practice. Miss Hill put her ideas before him, and he was so impressed and interested that he supplied the capital to buy the first houses.

"Mr Mascall would, I judge, find it very difficult to believe that any woman could ever be more businesslike than any man... Mr Mascall seems to have been reading his own vision of every man's collaboration with any woman into what was a unique and beautiful contact in the lives of two remarkable

and distinguished personalities." (Jeffery, 1935)

Mascall in his turn sent back a robust reply to Jean Thompson upholding his case that housing management should be an "open-sex occupation" (Mascall, 1935b).

On January 10th 1935, an ex-chairman of Ipswich Norwich Housing Committee (H. Palmer) gave his views on the matter.

"Sir, - I have been particularly interested in the correspondence in your columns on the above subject, and heartily confirm Mr Mascall's view that authorities should concentrate unitedly on the vital importance of experience, technical ability, maturity of outlook, and an understanding of sociological problems."

Later, he emphasises

"the need for the proper selection of candidates.

"I venture to say that if his advice is carried into effect, an Octavia Hill woman will be selected nine times out of ten.

"I have presided at a number of selection committees and on no occasion was there any doubt as to the higher suitability of the women if the factor of sex were ignored." (Palmer, 1936)

This correspondence has been quoted in some detail because it exposes some of the difficulties women housing managers were in and the problematic nature of the arguments which they were using. Jean Thompson's letter in particular summarises the dilemma. It was all very well to say that housing, like other occupations, should be open to both sexes but the fact of the matter was that women were at a grave disadvantage when it came to employment in local authorities. In order to overcome this disadvantage and to give themselves a special edge, they were having to use arguments about a "special



aptitude" of women for the work which implicitly reinforced the common idea that women had inherently different mental capabilities from men. This argument could easily be turned against them. For example, it could be concluded that women were more suited to the "personal" side of the work while men should do the large scale administration. We have already seen some reflection of this view in the "dual system" and it could be used to keep women out of jobs in which they would have more influence on policy or administration.

#### 4.3.4 The experience of interviewees in local authorities

In the case of Liverpool, opposition to the employment of women had focused around the issue of supervision of male staff. However opposition occurred on other grounds as well. The Society's argument that women could do the housing management job better than men could be challenged. Or preference could be given to men on the grounds that they should have the jobs when unemployment was high. For example, one woman housing manager interviewed said

"But then I put in for a job in X, which had got a Labour Council, were building quite a lot and had so far had their housing collected by agents. They'd appointed earlier a woman Housing Inspector (a member of the Society) and she had persuaded them, got over to them, that they needed proper management and so they proceeded to appoint three of us in addition to her...and I went in 1932 and stayed there until well into the war" [and later became the senior women member of staff].

This office was relatively unusual in that it had four men and eight women. But the person in charge of the housing side was the Estates Surveyor; though sympathetic to "good management" he was by no means convinced that

only women could do it.

"We used to have endless arguments; he said 'well what is Octavia Hill management? ...it's just good management'. I said 'yes, of course it is' 'well why can't men do it?' 'yes, well they can if they have the proper training'. So he proceeded to have...the funniest thing was he decided that they must go to have domestic science classes, because you see this argument was put forward that the woman was so much better talking to the housewife... because of course one part in those days...that you tried to get people to clean up...was important and of course most of these men had families just as much as I did...knew rather more some of them about...[domestic arrangement]."

For these domestic science classes, the staff were sent to the local college and the tutor was not viewed as an unqualified success. "Anyway she was a hopeless woman, she would teach us how to make floor polish or something..."

In this particular case the employment of women did not continue.

"There came a point when we had some vacancies and they [the council] said 'oh well, it's all been going extremely well and there are eight men and only four women, so we'll have some more men' so that we were winkled down a bit we women" [and women were replaced by men when they left].

The reason given was straightforward.

"Oh they wanted to employ men...employment was bad... they wanted good management but they thought the men could do it..." (Interview Society Member).

It has been mentioned that this office was relatively unusual in employing a mixed rent collection staff. Quite frequently a woman housing manager would be appointed with the agreed policy of implementing the "Octavia Hill system" and using trained staff, which at that stage usually meant women. Thus at Lancaster "It was accepted that the housing department was run by

women, full stop" (Interview, housing manager who trained at Lancaster). A number of "Society" offices were all-women offices as regards the housing management staff and remained so for many years. In other cases, particularly where a housing department was formed after rents had been collected by another department, for example the Treasurer's, these male rent collecting staff would be taken into the staff of the new "Octavia Hill department". One or two of the interviewees had worked quite happily in such offices where they might be supervising or training male staff and stressed the wide practical experience that these staff often had. But another felt that "If a woman was doing a job she was accepted...housing management itself was new... Octavia Hill had done it... But the idea of a man training under a woman was not on." (Interview, Society member).

In the case of new appointments of Octavia Hill staff, most interviewees stressed that what was important was that the council had made the decision and were firm about it and then the officers accepted it.

"The officers thought we were rather odd but they were quite nice to us. Of course it had been a decision of the council to have us and they knew that. They didn't really understand what we were trying to do." (Interview, Society member)

In this case, the decision of the council had been partly caused by the fact that they were taking on more slum clearance work and this happened in other interviewee's offices as well. Sometimes women managers were employed, without commitment to the "Octavia Hill system", on visiting prior to slum clearance but the society did not encourage such post. (See SWHEM Minutes 19.5.35.)

Thus the experience of interviewees in encountering discrimination was influenced by the arrangements of the office they worked in. But anyone looking for a new post or opening up a new office had to prove over again that women were capable of doing this kind of work.

#### 4.3.5 Employment in Housing Associations

Figure 4.2 shows that there was a steady increase in the number of appointments to new housing associations during this period also. The "big three" - Guinness, Peabody and Sutton - always seem to have employed male staff and male superintendents on their estates. (For example, their evidence to the Balfour Committee assumes this.) (Agate, 1936)

The associations employing women seem to have been the smaller ones, often formed by people who were influenced by "Octavia Hill" ideas. Some examples are given below.

The Improved Tenements Association had begun from work started in 1899 by Octavia Hill. Miss Dicken had managed the property for her and continued to manage after her death. The Association dealt in reconditioning work only and continued to employ women housing managers after its amalgamation with the Rowe Housing Trust ("E.M.", 1934).

Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society started from a conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship held in Birmingham in 1924. Great concern was expressed about the conditions in back to back houses and a group of people from the churches continued this

concern by forming the Society in 1925; this group included Florence Barrow, who had been in charge of a Quaker Relief Unit in Poland rehousing refugees from Russia, and later Mrs Lidderdale, who had had training under Octavia Hill (Fenter, 1960: 1-5). As the number of houses owned by the Society increased

"it was recognised that a full-time paid worker would be necessary. Miss Barrow had been in contact with Miss Dewar, Warden of the Birmingham Settlement, and Miss Jeffery, Manager of Property for the Commissioners of Crown Lands... and early in 1926 interviewed Miss F. M. Fenter, a university graduate who, after gaining the Social Study Diploma at the Settlement, agreed to go to London for a period of training with Miss Jeffery and with Mrs Barclay and Miss Perry of the St. Pancras House Improvement Society. Her training was on the lines advocated by Miss Octavia Hill and later elaborated by the Society of Housing Managers of which Miss Fenter was an original member and later became a Fellow." (Fenter, 1960: 13)

Liverpool Improved Houses Limited was formed in 1937 "to help the poorest tenants, left in the overcrowded districts, where their needs have hardly yet been touched by public effort and the condition of the houses has become worse rather than better during the last ten years." By 1928, they "have arranged for all their property to be managed on the Octavia Hill System, and have also undertaken the management of similar property belonging to the Marquess of Salisbury" (Liverpool Improved Houses Ltd., 1928). Liverpool Improved Houses became important as a training office for the Society and made a strong impact on a number of trainees (Interviews with society members).

A specific example of women's concern about housing was the formation of two associations concerned with single women.

Women's Pioneer Housing Limited was formed in 1921 as a co-operative society with the aim "of providing attractive flats for women who must make their own homes" (Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd., 1935). After some financial difficulties in the 1920s it was able to expand more in the 1930s though still on a modest scale; 522 flats by 1935 (Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd., 1935).

The Over Thirty Association (now the over Forty Association) was originally founded in the early 1930s to assist older women in obtaining employment.

"It was from conversations with these women and from research into housing conditions that the Association heard of the shocking conditions in which many of them had to live because of their poverty and lack of what is now called industrial muscle." (The Over Forty Association for Women Workers, 1981)

The immediate response was to start a hostel but, as time went on, it became clear that middle aged women wanted self contained housing so the association was gradually drawn into work in converting houses for flats, though most of this was after 1945. Priority was for "Women workers of slender means, particularly older women" (The Over Forty Association for Women Workers, 1981). (See also The Over Forty Association, 1983.)

From interviews with women managers and from correspondence in the journal it would seem that most of the housing associations employing women managers were like the ones quoted above, fairly small, often founded by groups of people who had some common voluntary activity for some time and continued to be so. Many of

these associations were linked with a tradition of voluntary effort in housing of which SWHEM was itself a part. Where women had been employed from the beginning it seems to have been easier to continue women's jobs. But once again the largest housing associations employed mainly men.

#### 4.3.6 Review of difficulties encountered by women housing managers.

This Section has shown that there could be a number of difficulties encountered by women housing managers in seeking employment with new organisations.

First of all, women at the time did not generally have much scope in employment. In 1931, 38% of all women 15-59 and 11% of married women 15-59 were employed or seeking work ("Occupied" in census terms) (Hakim, 1979:3). Women tended to be concentrated in typically female jobs, though Hakim (1979) has argued that over the period 1901 to 1971 occupational segregation did not decrease significantly. The housing field was not one which a priori was likely to be seen as typically feminine; for example, one of the related professions, surveying, had only recently become open to women.

Women were more accepted in the social work role but the women housing managers were keen not to be limited by this type of categorisation. Eleanor Rathbone's article indicates that local government was not in itself particularly receptive to women's participation except for routine clerical work. In addition women housing managers might, as at Liverpool, face the objection that

they were to be in charge of men. Even where there had not been a housing department previously there might well be male rent collectors who would be transferred to the new department. In addition the high level of unemployment at the period might be seen as another reason for not employing women, who would be seen as "taking away men's jobs". So, the women managers had an uphill battle on their hands. One of their weapons was that they specialised in a certain type of management but this might be turned against them, as at Leeds, if that type of management was seen as paternalistic, interfering and unnecessary. There was also an inherent problem in using an argument based on the special abilities of women which tended to reinforce stereotyping.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSIONS

The housing legislation of the inter-war period and the slow expansion of housing association activity provided opportunities for work concerned with the public and social provision of housing. Women were at that time concentrated in traditionally female jobs and the housing field might not a priori been seen as typically feminine. But the work of Octavia Hill, and of those people who had been trained by her, had begun to establish a precedent for employment. In particular, as housing organisations began to take on the task of slum clearance, more intensive management work, which might be done by women, was seen as necessary.

However, there was considerable opposition both to the idea of employing women and to Octavia Hill management. Although the Balfour Committee had been quite sympathetic



to ideas. the circular from the Ministry in 1938 gave only tepid support. though the recommendations on training followed the views of both the Society and the Institute. Any further progress on this, however, began to be hindered by the onset of war.

In view of these difficulties it is not surprising that the increase in women housing managers' employment was slow and it is probably a tribute to the effective organisation and publicity of the Society that progress was made at all. The next Chapter will show, first of all, how the Society constructed effective internal organisation, and then how it exerted pressure on the external environment in order to achieve its aim of furthering the employment of women housing managers.

## CHAPTER 4

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## CHAPTER 5

### 5 THE SOCIETY IN THE 1930s

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is concerned with the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers (after 1937 called the Society of Women Housing Managers). It is argued that the 1930s were a key period in the development of the Society so its activities are examined in some detail. In order to be effective in promoting women's employment, the Society had to achieve efficient internal organisation so this is considered first. Then the views about housing management which the Society was trying to promote are briefly examined. The recruitment and training system and the different ways in which the Society organised publicity are discussed. Included in this description are publications, contacts with other organisations, public speaking, contacts with employers at home and overseas. Finally an attempt is made to assess the effects of these activities in encouraging or supporting the work of women housing managers.

#### 5.2 THE ORGANISATION OF THE SOCIETY

##### 5.2.1 Initial Organisation

The first Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at the Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London on October 29th 1932, approximately 94 members and others being present. The office of President was instituted but left vacant. The Society, set up in 1932, had an organisation quite similar to that of AWHPM. It had a Council consisting of 20 members. A number of these (5 in 1932-3, 6 in 1933-4) were listed as Junior Members

(SWHEM. 1933). Senior members were those who had more than two years experience after training and had their applications supported by three other senior members (SWHEM. undated). One third of the Council retired each year and were not eligible to serve again for 1 year. At least 5 members of the Council were to be Ordinary Members (SWHEM. 1933).

There was an Executive which was charged with carrying on the business of the Society and usually seems to have consisted of about ten people. At first it had three sub-committees (for training, finance and propaganda) (SWHEM. 1933). This arrangement, with the Executive reporting to the Council and also having its own sub-committees, seems to have led to some strains, possibly exacerbated by the old rivalries between the different groups. Occasionally there were differences of opinion between the Executive and the Council (SWHEM Minutes. 22.1.33).

The Propaganda sub-committee was particularly active but a dispute arose about its terms of reference and it was wound up (SWHEM Minutes. 29.4.34). Apart from these 'teething troubles' the organisation seems to have worked reasonably smoothly. The other two sub-committees continued until the next stage in the development of the Society which was its incorporation. Table 5.1 shows the overall membership of the Society 1932-38. The membership only grew very slowly. By this stage its growth was limited by the Society's careful requirements about training.

TABLE 5.1

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY\* 1932-1938

	Oct 1932	Aug 1933	1934	1935	1936	Aug 1937	1938
Full members	86	102		122	148	164	159
Fellows (after incorporation)	-	-		-	-	-	26
Professional student members	28	29		47	58	54	60
Honorary members	-	-		-	24	27	30
Associate members (created at AGM 1932)	-	33		43	66	73	63
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>164</b>		<b>212</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>338</b>
	Oct. 1932	Aug 33 - 34	1925 (1936 AR)	1936 - 37	1937 - 38		
<u>Students Qualifying</u>							
P.A.S.I. Finals	2 (referred)	1	1				
Inter.	1		1	2	1		
WHPM Certificate	2	12	26	14	19		
Sanitary Science Certificate	3	2		2			
BSc in Est. Management University of London							
Final		1		1	2		
Inter.			2	1	1		
University Diplomas in Public Administration					2		

Source: Society of Women Housing Estate Managers\*  
Annual Reports 1932-1938

\* Society of Women Housing Estate Managers to 1937  
Society of Women Housing Managers from 1937

Miss Thrupp (a member of the Society) was appointed Secretary to begin work on a full time basis in December 1932 and it was decided to rent an office at 36 Victoria Street, SW1. Funds were taken over from the Association of Women House Property Managers and the Octavia Hill Club. Parker Morris agreed to assist the Society from time to time with legal advice (SWHEM, 1933). From this time forward the Society usually had a paid secretary and, after 1934, an assistant secretary and sometimes a paid clerk as well. By 1935 it had moved to offices in Suffolk Street in premises shared with the Housing Centre Trust (SWHEM Annual Reports 1932-9)..

#### 5.2.2 Incorporation

In 1935-36 the Society decided to apply to the Board of Trade for a certificate of incorporation (SWHEM, 1936). This was an important step forward. Parker Morris had been an important influence in pointing out the legal difficulties of not being a corporate body and had given much help and advice over the process of incorporation (SWHEM, 1937).

The Society of Women Housing Managers was incorporated on 8th September 1937 as an association limited by guarantee. It was registered with limited liability, without the addition of the word "limited" to its name. Among the objects of the Society as registered were:

- "(A) To follow and extend the principles initiated by Octavia Hill for the management of house property.
- (B) To provide a central organisation for persons engaged in or connected with the profession of Women Housing Managers trained in and following the principles of Octavia Hill, and to raise the status and to promote and encourage the

interests of the said profession.

- (C) To improve the technical and professional knowledge of members of the said profession by the provision of a library, the arrangement of meetings, lectures and discussions, the organisation of study tours."

(SWHM, 1937: 5.6).

23 members of the Society were named in the Articles of Association including those like Emily Murray, M. E. Marshall, Maud Galton and M. M. Jeffery, who had worked with Octavia Hill, and other younger managers such as Edith Kipping, B. Thrupp and Jean Thompson (SWHM, 1937: 11.13).

There were two classes of membership: Fellows and Ordinary Members. The Fellows were

- "(a) The subscribers to the Memorandum of Association of the Society;
- (b) Persons who, at the date of registration of the Society, were Full Members of the existing Society;
- (c) Such other persons as are or have been engaged in housing estate management. Provided that every Fellow of the Society shall possess the qualifications to be prescribed by the Council for Fellows."

(SWHM, 1937: 15.16)

The Officers were a President, a Vice President or Vice Presidents, and an Honorary Treasurer, together with "such other officers as the Council shall from time to time determine". The Council members were elected for three years by vote of the membership, one third retiring each year, and retiring members were not eligible for re-election for a period of a year. The usual kind of regulations regarding committees or sub-committees and

accounts were included (SWHM, 1937: 14-23).

The first meeting of the incorporated Society was held at the London School of Economics in November 1937, with 101 Ordinary Members. Honorary Members and Associates present (SWHM, 1938: 4).

#### 5.2.3 The Junior Organisation

This organisation came formally into being on 3rd December 1938. Its purpose was to enable younger members and students of the Society to meet and discuss matters of general and professional interest. It consisted of four regional groups and a central executive. The 1938-39 Annual Report stated that each group had had several meetings and speakers, including senior members of the Society and other experts on technical subjects (SWHM, 1939: 6).

#### 5.2.4 Meetings and Conferences

Figure 4.2 shows that the places where women housing managers were appointed were scattered all round the country. In some cases adjoining authorities might follow the same idea, but many women housing managers were in fairly isolated appointments or in offices with a small number of staff. In such circumstances the fact that the Society provided an opportunity to meet other women managers was important to many of them. The system of training (described in more detail in the next Section) meant that, by the time they had their first appointment, qualified women usually knew staff in two or three offices: some of these would have been trainees or younger staff who also moved around, so each person built

up a range of contacts. For many members an important opportunity to renew those contacts was provided by the meetings of the Society and in particular by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the Annual Provincial Conference.

"We used to go to Annual General Meetings, that was the great thing and everybody went - they were on a Saturday so that everybody could go.... It was one of the nice things about the Society....that you all knew each other and probably had contact with each other at one time or another." (Interview, Society Member)

"There was no problem with the Society, no problem at all: people came to meetings, we had student things, we had lectures: they came to the AGM in their hordes." (interview, Society Member)

The Provincial Conference and the AGM in London were important and some areas would have a local conference too. "People got to know each other." "We used to have rather amusing meetings: of course the Society was much smaller, one knew most of the people." (interview, Society Member) One interviewee even mentioned "the fun of going to conferences".

Considerable time was devoted by the committee to the planning of the Annual Provincial Conference and an outline of the topics covered is given in Figure 5.1.

It is interesting to note that, although visitors were obviously included in earlier conferences, it was not until 1939 that a general invitation was sent to local authorities to send representatives (SWHM, 1939: 3).

However, from the content and comments in the journal, it seems that the Annual Provincial Conference was intended

FIGURE 5.1

SOCIETY CONFERENCES (1932-1959)

1933	Lincoln	Foreign Housing Schemes
1934	Leicester	Visit to Leicester housing estates "The problems of the slum and its solution" Meeting for members only on the 1930 Housing Act and other topics
1935		Visit to Sheffield housing estates "The planning and construction of working class flats" Members' meeting - discussion on training
1936	Manchester	Visit to Wythenshawe estate "Low income housing on the continent" Members' meeting on incorporation, training and Housing Act 1930
1937	Reading	Visit to housing estates "Modern architecture and housing" Maxwell Fry Members' meeting - discussion on compromises in appointments and community centres on housing estates
1938	Hornsea	Meetings confined to business matters discussion of questions of general interest to members
1939	Somerville College, Oxford	"The planning and design of cottage estates" "Housing as a social service" Members' meeting - matters of general interest First Conference to which local authorities invited to send delegates - 27 did so.

Source: Society of Women Housing Estate Managers\*  
Minutes and Journals 1932-38.

\*Society of Women Housing Estate Managers to 1937  
Society of Women Housing Managers from 1937



to serve a 'propaganda' purpose as well as a means of enabling members to meet.

By 1938-39, therefore, the Society seems to have overcome some initial difficulties, caused partly by amalgamating the different groups of 'Octavia Hill workers', to have consolidated its organisation and status by obtaining incorporation, and to have provided some extra back up for its junior members. Although it was a formally constituted organisation, its style, according to interviewees, was informal and meetings were held without undue pomp and circumstance. As we have seen, the small size of the Society and its organisation meant that the women in it were helped to build up a social network of people in the same occupation if they felt they needed it. The importance of such networks for women has been discussed by a number of writers.

For example, Ryan comments on women's voluntary associations in a particular neighbourhood:

"Most were congregations of peers: members of similar age groups, occupations and ethnic backgrounds. Most rejected a rigid governing hierarchy and condescending manners.... The association relied on informal but expansive social ties, a voluntary network of like-minded individuals, as its organisational machinery and political leverage." (Ryan, 1979: 68,69)

SHM interviewees often used the phrase "like-minded" to describe the membership of the Society. It is possible to argue with regard to the Society, as Ryan did with regard to the associations she investigated, that

"The power of women's networks, be it manifest in female moral reform or the New Right, deserves more than either congratulations or condemnation. It requires serious, critical attention to both its historical permutations and diverted feminist possibilities." (Ryan, 1979: 83)

The significance of such organisation for the Society was not only that it could operate effectively; it could also provide support for its members. It had provided itself with sufficient organisation to carry out the training and publicity work described in the rest of this Chapter.

### 5.3 THE SOCIETY'S VIEW OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT

At this stage it is appropriate to ask what was the view of housing management which the Society was trying to promote in its various publications, as well as the employment of women. As an official statement of its views we will take the version of "Housing Estate Management by Women" published in 1934 (SWHEM, 1934a). Additionally we will look at "The Administration of Municipal Housing Estates" by Jean Thompson, identified by interviewees as representing the more "progressive" elements in the Society (Thompson, 1931).

After a brief historical introduction, "Housing Estate Management by Women" lays down the principles of the work. First of all, it discusses the role of the landlord and says that Octavia Hill realised that "the supply of living accommodation to the poor could not be regarded primarily as a profit-making business without disastrous effects on health and civic life". But "Octavia Hill did not devise a system suitable to the widespread public control and ownership of today". Her approach had been to demonstrate the immediate advantages to be gained from improving the management of working class houses. On the other hand the Society argues that "there is now a general acceptance of the principle that, if the provision of living accommodation for

those who are too poor to bargain freely and obtain value for money. is to be undertaken for private profit. the interests of the tenant must be safeguarded by the State". (SWHEM, 1934a: 3.4)

The Society therefore argues that the "business" and "social welfare" aspects of housing management are not independent spheres of activity.

The second principle outlined is that of "homes not houses": that the need for a home for a family should govern both the design of new property and the improvement of older property, rather than the profit motive. It repeats the ideal of mutual obligation of landlord and tenant but argues that tenants may sometimes need to be "roused" to their responsibilities. "From this evolved the idea of sympathetic management, dealing with individuals instead of with tenements in the mass." The need for trained staff to deal with tenants in this way is emphasised.

The scope of the work is outlined. This includes rent collection and rent fixing, dealing with arrears, and it is emphasised that this must be appropriate to the circumstances of the family. Advice to tenants on money matters and help with employment or contacts with officials is also mentioned. Maintenance of property is discussed, including both repairs and disinfestation. It is pointed out that in private work this may involve direct employment of building operatives, whereas in local authorities it would usually be carried out by another department. The keeping of accurate accounts and balancing them is stressed. Selection and placing of tenants, court work and records, reports and committee

work are also part of the job. Finally, the broader range of a manager's work, in new development and in care for open spaces and community facilities, is discussed.

Jean Thompson's paper "The Administration of Municipal Housing Estates" can be taken as representing the more forward looking views. It states that attention has been concentrated on the building of local authority housing but it is now time more attention was given to its management. Moreover, Thompson argues that there is an urgent need "for thinking out and clearly formulating a body of principles to govern municipal housing administration". She argues that the previous experience of the private landlord provided no such principles to go on, but principles do need to take account of the human and social as well as financial and technical aspects of management. She discusses the tension between the 'social aspect' of housing and the 'municipal trading aspect' and that it is disastrous to ignore either.

As a basis for the new approach, local authorities should recognise that "the majority of tenants will respond to efforts made to improve their environment but that the extent of the response depends very considerably on whether the estates are well-managed or not". In actual operation, the principle will demand the setting up of a properly constituted housing department with a responsible manager, because splitting up the functions between several departments results in a lower standard of efficiency with lack of responsible management.

Thompson discusses rent collection and arrears in the

context that tenants often feel that the Council can afford to lose money more than the private landlord; but, if arrears are just allowed to mount, the development of collective ownership in housing will ultimately be retarded. On the other hand, she points out the difficulty in taking action on arrears in areas of widespread unemployment. The stress on careful selection and placing of tenants and on maintenance work is also repeated. Thompson's view is that tenants should be encouraged to report defects in their housing because the local authorities' maintenance work is part of looking after its own asset.

The importance of advisory work on new building needs, etc and of a co-ordinated approach to housing is stressed. Thompson particularly emphasises the need for selection of tenants to be done by officers rather than councillors to avoid abuse, dealing with a problem which was to surface many times in housing.

The main difference between the Society's official publication and Jean Thompson's leaflet is therefore on the emphasis on municipal management in the latter and the more explicit challenge in the latter to think through new principles of management.

It is relevant to ask how far the Society's views and practice differed from those of other housing organisations. The Balfour Committee had shown an enormous variety of housing management practice with some local authorities having a rather poor level of practice.

Its papers and visits also reveal a strong influence still pervading from the Public Health Movement, particularly because of slum clearance. For formal reviews the best sources are the "submissions to the Balfour Committee from the Institute of Housing (Institute of Housing, 1936a) and the AMC (Association of Municipal Corporations, 1937). All emphasised the need for better housing management, but the Society had much more emphasis on the delivery of the service to the tenant and on the attempt to integrate the "business" and "social" sides of the work. In general the Institute of Housing and AMC papers concentrate on "business", and "welfare" appears rather as an add on extra, particularly directed to ex slum clearance tenants. They reveal a large scale bureaucratic approach. Society interviewees felt strongly that the actual practice of management differed much more but this point is difficult to settle from current evidence.

#### 5.4 RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

##### 5.4.1 The Priority given to Training

Like the AWHPM and the Octavia Hill Club before it, the Society spent a considerable amount of time and energy on recruiting suitable students and training them. An undated pamphlet, which from its content belongs to the period 1933-36, gives details of the training scheme and these are shown in Figure 5.2. Its close relationship with the 1930-32 AWHPM training scheme (Figure 3.2) can be seen. The training scheme was also fully described in "Housing Estate Management for Women" (SWHEM, 1934a). A training secretary was appointed (SWHEM, 1933) and considerable discussion of training is recorded.

## TRAINING SCHEME.

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The Society of Women Housing Estate Managers undertakes the training of students in house property, and estate management in the methods established by Octavia Hill.

All applications for training should be made in person in London, to the Secretary (in certain cases, students can be interviewed in the provinces).

All candidates for training must be interviewed by the Training Committee or members appointed by them before being accepted as Student Members.

After acceptance for training, students are placed in offices by arrangements with individual managers. The first three months are probationary and this period may be extended at the discretion of the Training Committee.

The training consists of practical and theoretical work.

### Practical.

It is regarded as essential that students should work in at least two offices, it being desirable that one should be municipal and one non-municipal.

In cases where students are articled pupils to surveyors special arrangements agreeable to the Surveyor's Institution will be made by the Training Committee.

### Theoretical.

Students must have had a good general education and must be prepared to take :—

- either (1) The Women House Property Managers' Certificate of the Chartered Surveyors' Institution ;
- or (2) The Professional Examination of the Chartered Surveyors' Institution ;
- or (3) A B.Sc. Degree in Estate Management.

In special circumstances, an alternative technical examination will be accepted, such as the Sanitary Science Certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute, or other technical qualification considered suitable by the Training Committee.

Holders of special qualifications such as certain University degrees may not be asked to take any further definite examinations, but must supplement such qualifications with an agreed technical course.

There shall be three classes of professional membership : (1) student members, (2) junior members, (3) senior members.

Students, after an approved period of training, may apply to the Society for junior membership, such membership will usually be granted after two years, while in the case of graduates or students with exceptional previous experience it may be granted after one year.

Junior members may apply for suitable posts, but only with the approval of the Training Committee.

Senior membership of the Society will not be granted until a period of two years after acceptance as a junior member. Applications for senior membership must be submitted on a form stating qualifications and experience and supported by three senior members who have had personal knowledge of the applicant's work ; the Council to consider such applications together with the recommendations of the Training Committee.

The fee, including entrance fee to the Society, is 20 guineas and in addition students will have to meet lecture and examination fees, which vary according to the examination taken.

In this Section, the procedures for recruitment, financial arrangements for training, and the content of the theoretical and practical training will be discussed and the function of the training system assessed.

#### 5.4.2 Recruitment

Figure 5.2 shows that provision was made for the secretary to interview applicants initially though special arrangements could be made for those in the provinces. The Society tried to promote awareness of Housing Management as a career by contacting schools and universities (see also Section Eight of this Chapter), by getting material on housing management included in careers guides, and through their policy of public speaking to as wide a variety of groups as possible (see Section Eight). Applicants had quite often had some personal contact with a member of the Society through these activities or had spoken to somebody who knew about the work. For example, headmistresses were mentioned in a couple of cases and one of the tutors at Somerville seems to have been instrumental in introducing two or three students to the idea of housing management (Interviewees).

All students had to be interviewed by members of the training committee before being accepted for training. With the growth of municipal posts to which people were appointed before they came to the Society, this recruitment interview was questioned, but the Society decided to continue this valuable control over membership entry.



"The question of municipally accepted students being interviewed by the Training Committee was discussed and it was decided that such students be interviewed before acceptance as students of the Society."  
(SWHM, Quarterly Bulletin, April 1939: 1)

The interview, which often seems to have been before quite a large committee, was sometimes a daunting process and tended to make quite an impression on would be trainees. A number would echo the view that it was "quite ghastly" (interview, Member of the Society) but some appreciated the care given.

"Well I can remember being very interested in the sort of quality of the interview which I had; it was very meticulous. it was very very searching. The thing that I was impatient with....was their very rigid rules about training. in the sense that they interviewed me and said yes we think we will accept you for training but we can't place you until goodness knows when....you see this was the first problem that I think the Society was always up against - that they were just too tiny and too dedicated. if you like. to expand". (Interview, Society member)

"Horrible. About 30 women all sort of glaring at me and trying to persuade me that I wasn't suitable for housing at all; they had that technique. I think, of putting difficulties in your way to see how keen you were....you were put in a chair facing the whole lot of them and they shot questions at you....I'm rather obstinate by nature and the more they put me off....the more I decided to do it." (Interview, Society member)

An interviewee felt that the same tradition continued after the second world war

"In the SHM you had not only to have the accepted academic qualifications for training you also had to pass a very stiff interview with about three of the Council members to prove your dedication and all the rest of it. I'd like to think you didn't have to prove you had the right social background, but I wouldn't be surprised if there wasn't an element of that in it." (Interviewee who began training in 1945)

It could be argued that some degree of social exclusiveness was the inevitable result of the

contemporary conditions for education and training.

"It was a bit (middle class) wasn't it? I think, you see, pre war mostly the people who had the educational background required were people of upper middle class on the whole, or middle class, they weren't all 'ladies'....but in asking for the educational background in those days you were picking a social type also. The old guard, when we were training, were people with private incomes. Certainly the Post War generations weren't. But we did have to find 50 for training and some students didn't get paid at all, so that's a clue. In local government offices you did get paid and students' pay got better: but you were expected to 'rough it'." (Interviewee, above)

#### 5.4.3 Financial Arrangements for Training

Students had to pay an entrance and training fee to the Society of 20 guineas. In addition students had to meet lecture and examination fees which would vary according to the examination taken (SWHEM, 1934a: 11).

In the early days, students, especially those in private or housing trust offices, were often not paid or paid very little. The beginnings of municipal training posts meant that these students were paid (although the rates were not high) and might have their fees paid for them (SWHEM, 1934a: 11).

The financial burden of training therefore implied that students or their families had to have some private resources which tended to mean that they came from the more privileged class of society. However some students came from rather less well off homes and made considerable sacrifices in order to train, for example saving money from a previous job to pay for the training period (Interviewee).

Also some effort was made by the Society to help those who were less well off. In 1939 the Octavia Hill Scholarship Fund was set up

"to endow scholarships of 50 a year to help specially selected candidates with their training fees. It was felt that no more valuable way of commemorating the life work of Octavia Hill could be found than this, which would enable some specially fitted for the work to train for it, with the help of a grant towards their expenses; some who would, otherwise, have to turn to other more immediately remunerative careers. The Society has been most grateful for valuable help of this kind afforded by the Horace Street Trust during many years past, and only longs to have sufficient funds to secure such help to those needing it in years to come." (E.M., 1939)

#### 5.4.4 Theoretical Training

The provision of adequate theoretical training and time for study still remained a problem. The syllabus was still provided by the Chartered Surveyors' Institution and tuition by the College of Estate Management, but there was some dissatisfaction with both of these (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, July 1935). The 1930s syllabus contained mainly technical subjects but its spread could cause difficulty to students:

"A list of subjects for the Women House Property Managers' Certificate (1933) is a useful indication of examination requirements.

- (1) Central and Local Government (Outline of)
- (2) Construction of Buildings
- (3) Dilapidations (Measurement and Valuation of)
- (4) Draughtsmanship
- (5) Economics (Elements of)
- (6) Estate Accounts
- (7) Fixtures and Dilapidations (Law of)
- (8) Landlord and Tenant
- (9) Local and Imperial Taxation and Tithe Rent Charge
- (10) Report
- (11) Sanitation as applied to houses.

"The mixture of legal and scientific subjects is attractive to some students and difficult for others. The same person cannot as a rule shine at valuations, mathematical subjects, drawing plans, grasping legal points, and writing good reports, and

some candidates will find it necessary to take longer over the course than others. A University degree course in Economics, Commerce or Law will help; some Science degrees and a History degree make an interesting background. Languages and Literature naturally do not cover the same ground. From the purely educational standpoint it is a great advantage to have a University degree; from the point of view of tackling the syllabus for the Women House Property Managers' Certificate it is unnecessary." (SWHEM. 1934a: 12)

In July 1933 the Training Committee discussed the desirability of having two classes of certificate, one for managers and one for assistants (SWHEM. Minutes. 8.7.33: 14). This suggestion was not accepted but the possibility of having a less exacting qualification was discussed from time to time and carried out after the war.

Discussion of the syllabus went on over a considerable time (see also SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin, January 1936a & SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin, July 1938: 4). There was particular dissatisfaction with the lack of social services content.

The tuition provided by the College of Estate Management was advertised as being whole time, evening class or postal (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin, April 1936) but this meant that students outside London had to study by correspondence with all the attendant disadvantages.

Particular attention was drawn by the Balfour Committee to the need for better knowledge of the social services (CHAC. 1939: 28) and the SWHEM 1927-38 Annual Report states

"Much consideration has been given to the question of affording facilities to students to acquire more knowledge of the social services during their

training. An Education Sub-Committee is actively at work, and consultations are in progress with the Chartered Surveyors' Institution and with other bodies. The latest books on the social services have been added to the Library and students have been given guidance in reading." (SWHM, 1938: 7)

The comments in the Balfour Report in fact led to a thorough review of the syllabus.

"An important event to be recorded this year is the revision of the syllabus for the Women House Property Managers' Certificate (hereafter to be called the Women Housing Managers' Certificate) carried out by the Chartered Surveyors' Institution in consultation with the Society. The revised syllabus will consist of the following subjects:

- (1) Landlord and Tenant
- (2) Law of Housing
- (3) Construction and Maintenance of Buildings
- (4) Sanitation of Buildings
- (5) Estate Records and Accounts
- (6) Machinery of Government
- (7) Family Income
- (8) The Social Services.

"It will thus be seen that the syllabus has been more effectively adjusted to the needs of the Octavia Hill manager, thereby meeting the criticisms embodied in the Balfour Report (and made by managers and students alike) that the social aspects of the work were too much neglected in the examination." (SWHM, 1939: 7)

#### 5.4.5 Practical Training

Practical training continued to be given considerable importance. The training scheme stated "It is regarded as essential that students should work in at least two offices, it being desirable that one should be municipal and one non-municipal" (Figure 5.2) The Minutes of May 1933 (SWHEM, Minutes, 6.5.33) record that there had been some discussions as to whether training in two offices should be compulsory and this seems to have been favoured by Council. But it was held that making it compulsory rather than desirable for municipal trainees to work in a non-municipal office "would fatally hamper the best

prospects for the future". (SWHEM. Minutes. 6.5.33) Also in 1933 the Training Committee established a list of offices recognised for training students which was accepted by the Executive Committee "for guidance in placing students" (SWHEM. Minutes. 6.5.33). Thus there were a number of offices which were regularly used for training though occasionally students would get employment in other offices and have that placement ratified (so long as it was a "society office") or new offices would be added.

The Training Committee regularly reviewed the progress of students in practical training and if their experience or standard of work was not considered satisfactory they would be referred for a longer period of training and not recommended for full membership (SWHEM. Minutes. 16.11.35 onwards).

Control of the environment in which students learned was maintained quite strictly as the following extracts from a 1939 Council report show.

"Training. The council has decided to call a meeting of all managers who train students with a view to achieving a greater uniformity of training. A questionnaire on this subject was approved for circulation to managers before the meeting takes place."

"Council considered the case of a student who, after her three month's probationary period, had withdrawn from training and accepted a traineeship in an office where the Octavia Hill system was not practised. It was agreed to point out to her the disadvantages of severing her connection with a professional society and, by means of the Junior Organisation, to inform students that it was not in accordance with correct professional standards to apply for posts which were not recognised by the Society after having started work in a recognised office." (SWHM Quarterly Bulletin, April 1939)

#### 5.4.6 The Functions of the Training System

The role of training in providing coherence to an occupational group has been widely recognised, particularly in the literature on professions and semi-professions (a term used by Etzioni (1969) to define jobs like teaching and social work which lack some of the characteristics of true professions). The Society, as we have seen, used the word professional but it seems from the context that it was used in a general way to indicate a high standard of conduct rather than as a sociological term. The present study is not concerned with measuring exactly how far along the continuum of professionalisation the Society had proceeded at each stage. What is valuable from the literature on professions and semi-professions is the understanding of the role that training and examinations play in occupational development.

Millerson (1964), for example, lists six essential features of a profession.

1. A profession involves a skill based on theoretical knowledge.
2. The skill requires training and education.
3. The professional must demonstrate competence by passing a test.
4. Integrity is maintained by adherence to a code of conduct.
5. The service is for the public good.
6. The profession is organised.

Wilensky (1964) has constructed a table which summarises the development of eighteen occupations and identifies eight steps in the process of professionalisation, of which the establishment of training schools is one step. Such literature would indicate that, for the Society,

training would both increase the status of the occupation and make the group more cohesive.

Freidson (1977) proposes a more pragmatic definition "an occupational monopoly with a position of dominance in the division of labour". This housing managers have never gained, though the Institute and Society aspired to.

Sandle (1980) has provided one of the few discussions of professionalisation in the housing context, though this is related to the present day Institute of Housing. She has demonstrated that, despite claims by the current Institute of Housing that a "housing professional" exists, this concept is in fact hard to identify. She came to the conclusion that housing was a long way from being fully professionalised because:

- "1. The housing professional has not been clearly identified;
2. It has not fully identified its own body of knowledge and skills;
3. It has totally ignored the socialisation of its professionals and has not developed behavioural norms that foster a professional identity, so that its members are subjectively conscious of themselves as being part of a community." (Sandle, 1980: 107)

Sandle obtained her information on Institute Housing members' attitudes from telephone interviews with a sample of Institute members (28 interviews) and interviews with certain key people. She identified particular weakness in the socialisation of housing students although she linked this with the lack of full time education.

Illich's definition demonstrates his more radical critique of professionalism



"neither income, long training, delicate tasks nor social standing is the mark of the professional. Rather it is his authority to define a person as client, to determine that person's need and to hand the person a prescription." (Illich, 1977)

Part of the definition of clients and prescriptions in housing can be observed as occurring in the 1930s, though it was of considerably earlier origins; the Society of Housing Managers can be seen as playing a part in that process but only in the context of the broader developments in housing described in earlier chapters.

Halmos (1973) and Bennett and Hokenstad (1973) discuss the radical critique of professionalism, its origins and significance, and it is clear that the current debate is far broader than just the characteristics which define a profession. Many of the issues which have been raised in post 1960s debates about the role of professionalism are generally relevant to housing management but will be discussed at a later stage when the Society's contribution is being evaluated. In general it can be said that training and education are recognised as ways in which professions, emerging professions and semi professions seek both to increase the competence of their members and to improve their status and bargaining power.

The evidence presented here about training procedures and the evidence given directly by interviewees suggest that the Society exerted a rather more powerful influence on its students than the post-1965 Institute did. First of all, as we have seen, the Society retained firm hold on the personal recruitment interview - an opportunity to assess the attitudes of a potential student as well as

educational standards. Secondly, the Society arranged the training and, as we have seen, tried to influence the quality of the training offices. Thirdly, the form of practical training usually involved close personal contact between the more experienced member and the student - a situation which is conducive to the passing on of values and attitudes. These factors would tend to mean a more powerful socialisation of students, binding them into a more cohesive group. In addition, the fact that most students trained in two offices gave them a wider range of contacts within the Society which often remained important to them (Interviewees).

In a different context, Dearlove (1973) has discussed the significance of "recruitment rules" and "behaviour rules" for a particular group (local government councillors). He has argued that where "recruitment rules" are strong, "behaviour rules" do not have to be so rigidly laid down as the right type of person is recruited to being with (Dearlove, 1973: 101-146). The Society, as we have seen, maintained strict "recruitment rules" but also provided itself with the opportunity for passing on "behaviour rules", thus making itself into a cohesive social group.

To argue for the importance of training in this way is not to argue that students were uncritical of their training offices or accepted all the procedures and values that were passed on. Interviewees were sometimes critical of some aspects of their training or at variance with their training managers (SWHM, Quarterly Bulletin, January 1938: 5). But the practice of training in two offices could mean that if one office was for some reason

or other not found congenial by a particular student the other one could be. In the process of training, interviewees often came into contact with people that they regarded as having been very influential in their career. Interviewees who had trained with the Society over this period did usually seem to show that they were "subjectively conscious of themselves as being part of a community" (Sandle, 1980: 107) in contrast to present day Institute of Housing members. This consciousness of community, it is argued, was developed by the training system and further reinforced by other aspects of the Society's activities.

The training scheme seems to have worked successfully in this context, but the system did have its penalties. The main one was that selectivity and close personal supervision in training meant that the supply of training places was very limited and students could only be trained slowly. Interviewees felt that this was a major limitation on the growth of the Society in the 1930s and in the post war period. The number of students during this period is given in Table 5.1. The expansion was painfully slow. Numbers were also limited by the lack of finance for housing training. Though the Balfour Committee considered the content of training, it limited itself to making recommendations about the content of training and the need for adequate payment of trained women staff (CHAC, 1929: 29). Without financial help and with only a restricted number of women receiving higher education it is likely that the Society's students would be a somewhat socially exclusive group and, as we have

seen. this may have been reinforced by the recruitment process. Whatever other considerations may be applied to this. it would also have increased the amount of group cohesion by ensuring that members had to some extent common backgrounds. and this feeling was expressed by interviewees. Through its meetings and its training system the Society had organised itself effectively as a group. The next Sections will demonstrate how it sought to bring pressure on the outside world.

As in the 1920s. students' experience of practical training could be mixed. In general they welcomed the wider experience that they were given and what was often close personal supervision and instruction.

"They kept very close contact. We had six monthly reports. It was very intensive training both from the people who were doing the training and the trainees. and the training manager had to send in regular reports and you got interviewed every now and then." (Interviewee who started training in 1935)

The personal emphasis could have its disadvantages however.

"Now it was a curious training. It was very good on the personal side because that depended very much on who you were taken round with....and I went round with a very nice women. I should have learnt much more on repairs which I didn't: that I think was partly sort of chance as to how much you got because they did have a lot of repairs which were very difficult because such a lot of it was very old property." (Interviewee who started training in 1930)

## 5.5 PUBLICATIONS

Since the Society had the task of making its existence and work known to as wide an audience as possible. in order to gain general support and the opportunities of employment. use of the printed word was obviously

desirable. Chapter Three Section Four described how both the AWHPM and the Octavia Hill Club had been active both in producing their own publications and in getting articles into those of other organisations. The Society followed the same pattern and the various types of publication produced in the period 1932-38 will be described in this Section.

#### 5.5.1 The Quarterly Bulletin

Publication of the Quarterly Bulletin began in 1933. The very first issue was duplicated but from the second issue onwards the copies were printed, though marked "for private circulation only." The format was a small booklet 8" x 6" often with a black and white photograph on the cover. In 1936 a slightly larger version (8.3/4" x 6") began to appear with a pale green cover often bearing a photograph and with advertisements inside (sometimes using colour printing). This format was continued until the war though later copies had a plain cover.

The first issue of the Quarterly Bulletin stated

"It is hoped that the Quarterly Bulletin will be a means of keeping all Members in touch with the Society and its activities; but the aim of the Quarterly Bulletin is not to be merely a list of happenings: it is hoped that in the future it may become a useful organ for the exchange of ideas and experiences. With these objects in view, we do urge members to send contributions - items of news, articles bearing on some particular phase of the work, or of general interest." (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, April 1933)

In the middle years of this period, the content settled to that of an editorial (usually short), articles and reports (sometimes in some detail) of conferences and

meetings attended by Society members. A specific item headed Members News which included short reports from members on their work, notes on publications, notices of forthcoming meetings addressed by members, and a note of members' appointments. Many of these items provide useful information about the Society and its members.

The articles were usually about very specific topics of interest to members: "The Application of the 1935 Act" (July 1936). "Differential rents" (October 1936 and a number of other occasions). "The Creation of Community Centres on Housing Estates" (April 1937).

"Disinfestation" (April 1938 and many other occasions). Articles and notes on housing in other countries were also common. It is tempting to see the articles in the Bulletin as a reflection of members' interests but this must be treated with caution as they are also a reflection of what people were prepared to write about. But when there is a succession of articles by members, and letters, it seems safe to conclude a some member interest in the topic - this was the case with disinfestation for example.

It seems reasonable to conclude therefore that the Bulletin should be viewed mainly as a means of informing and supporting members rather than as a publicity vehicle. though Parker Morris had argued that it should be used for publicity (SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, January 1936b).

### 5.5.2 "Housing Estate Management by Women"

In 1933 the Executive accepted the Propaganda Committee's resolution that materials for publicity should include "A short summary of the Society's aims, together with a list of the personnel of all Committees with the members' university and professional qualifications.... Various members were deputed to work on this booklet." (SWHEM, Minutes. 22.1.32) The scope obviously grew quite rapidly and it was agreed that the pamphlet should indicate

"that women housing estate managers can be of especial use by their contributions as to the proper laying out of estates, the external and internal decorations, fittings etc., the layout of gardens and general planning, especially on the aesthetic side of the work, and that a tactful hint might be incorporated in this section as to the value of the employment of women with a special background and technical knowledge which is of great value in educating the Housing Committee to a sense of their social responsibilities."

"Miss Jeffery was completing the historical part, Mrs Barclay the appendices and statistics, and Miss J. Thompson the municipal part." (SWHEM, Minutes. 10.9.33)

In time, production was completed

"The pamphlet has been printed and is in circulation. The following papers had advance copies: Times, Daily Telegraph, Daily Herald, News Chronicle, Morning Post, Manchester Guardian, Evening Standard, Liverpool Post, Yorkshire Post, Birmingham Post, Leeds Mercury, Nottingham Guardian, The Scotsman, Glasgow Herald, Municipal Journal, Estates Gazette, Queen, Spectator, New Statesman, Time and Tide, Sunday Observer, Sunday Referee, Sunday Times".

All the women MPs had received copies (SWHEM, Minutes. 14.4.34).

This extract is interesting in showing the scope of the Society's publicity. The pamphlet "Housing Estate Management by Women" (SWHEM, 1934a) was to remain the backbone of the Society's publicity for some time. First printed in March 1934, it was reprinted in 1936, 1938 and

1940. and a revised edition was produced in 1946.

### 5.5.3 Other Publications

The Society published its Training Scheme partly, it seems from the content, for propaganda purposes. It followed the precedent set by AWHPM and the Octavia Hill Club of getting articles published in other Journals and sometimes reprinting them for its own use.

"A Day in my Official Life: Housing Estate Manager", by Jean Thompson was published by the Institute of Public Administration (Thompson, 1935). An article in The Times, January 20th 1939: "Careers for Girls: Women Property Managers" (Times, 1939) was used for a reprinted leaflet. The output of such leaflets was not however quite as intensive as around 1930. It seems that some of the earlier leaflets were still in use. For example, the Parker Morris Memorandum was still being circulated (SWHEM. Minutes. 22.1.33). Parker Morris had urged that Society members continue to contribute to other journals, including women's magazines and this did continue. For example, "Miss Barclay had written an article for "New Statesman". Miss Tabor for "Women's Magazine" in response to request. Miss Thompson, in response to request, for "Public Administration" (SWHM. Minutes. 18.11.39). "Property Management" by Irene Barclay (Barclay, undated), originally written as a chapter in a book, was produced as a booklet, published this time by Methuen but clearly used by the Society.



## 5.6 CONTACTS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

An important part of the publicity work was co-operation with other organisations. This could lead to a number of benefits such as issues being raised at meetings and conferences, and mutual support for publicity and lobbying on issues of common interest. Such co-operation was often facilitated by an overlap in membership. In this Section we deal with organisations with which there was some kind of repeated informal contact rather than just the public speaking described in the next Section, though it is not possible to draw a completely clear line between the two. Not surprisingly, the two groups of bodies of primary importance to SWHEM were those concerned with women and those concerned with housing. An example of co-operation with a women's organisation (National Council of Women) and with a housing organisation (National Housing and Town Planning Council) are discussed in detail and then some of the other organisations with which SWHEM worked are mentioned. Finally, the Society's rather less harmonious relationship with the Institute of Housing is described.

### 5.6.1 National Council of Women

The National Council of Women was "the co-ordinating body for a number of women's organisations" (Barrow, 1980). At its first meeting the Society approved affiliation to the National Council of Women and that Miss Galton should be the Society's representative (SWHEM, Minutes, 6.5.33). Attempts were made to use the links with the National Council of Women in a positive way. For example, in 1933 the Executive recommended "that application be made to the National Council of Women for the setting up of a

sectional committee on housing...." (SWHEM. Minutes. 8.7.33).

By October 1933 a sub-committee was considering a letter from the National Council of Women on the Sectional Committee on Housing. It was agreed that an advertisement should be drawn up to be put in the National Council of Women handbook and that a resolution be drawn up to be submitted to the Annual Conference of NCW. "such resolution to consider combining references to the need of women housing estate managers in connection with slum clearance. especially urging that such management be employed from the commencement of slum clearance schemes" (SWHEM. Minutes. 28.10.33).

In 1936 Miss Upcott and Miss Galton submitted a resolution to the National Council of Women

"To urge on Housing Authorities. Public Utility Societies and private owners the necessity of providing. in connection with re-housing. an adequate minimum of square yards per family of play space for young children adjoining the buildings and of play space for older children near to those buildings." (SWHEM. Minutes. April 1936)

In 1936 another resolution was framed for inclusion in the National Council of Women agenda.

"That the National Council of Women. having previously urged local authorities to adopt the Octavia Hill system of management on their housing schemes. especially in reference to slum clearance. wishes now to call attention to the regrettable tendency of certain local authorities to make use of women solely in low-grade. specialised welfare posts. as distinct from employing trained women in full administrative control." (SWHEM. Minutes. 14.5.36)

Contact with and resolutions to the National Council of Women were thus ways for the SWHEM to get its views known

to a wider constituency of women and to seek support both for the employment of women managers and for specific housing policies which were considered to be of importance to women.

#### 5.6.2 National Housing and Town Planning Council

The NHTPC was formed in 1900, as a non political body concerned with the improvement of the living environment, with a membership from local authorities, housing associations, building societies, etc. (Housing and Planning Review, Summer 1981: 3).

SWHEM decided at its first meeting to send a representative to this body (SWHEM, Minutes, 6.5.33). The relationship with NHTPC seems to have been quite close, with reports of its conferences appearing at regular intervals in the Society's Bulletin (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, January 1935, January 1936, January 1937, July 1937). Again the contact was used to raise the issue of women housing managers. For example, it was agreed "that a resolution on the extended use of Women Housing Estate Managers be sent for inclusion on the agenda of the National Housing and Town Planning Council" (SWHEM, Minutes, 8.7.33).

Again there was an overlap of membership. SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin, January 1937, reported

"The National Housing and Town Planning Council's Conference at Harrogate in November was attended by 1,200 representatives from 415 Local Authorities and 19 Associations. Our Society was well represented. Miss Jeffery attended as a member of the Council's General Committee and Executive. Miss Thompson was a delegate from Rotherham and was also asked by our Council specially to represent the Society. Miss

Haynes (Lancaster), Miss Wilson (Newcastle-under-Lyme), Miss Humphries (Bognor) were our other members present."

Mentions of the work of women housing managers at NHTPC conferences were carefully noted by Society representatives. Such conferences obviously presented an opportunity to meet local authority representatives who might not yet have made any arrangements for housing management and to be part of more general debates on housing.

### 5.6.3 Other Organisations

At SWHEM's first meeting, representation was also agreed to the Royal Sanitary Institute and the Conference of the Institute of Public Health. Representatives were regularly sent to the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, and the conferences of the Royal Institute of Public Health were also regularly reported (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, October 1936, July 1938, July 1939).

Representation to the Charity Organisation Society was also agreed at the first meeting. There was later a motion to withdraw from COS but this was defeated (SWHEM, Minutes, 28.10.33). Subsequently a decision was made that all students under 20 years of age, accepted for a three years' course of training, would have three months training in an office of the Charity Organisation Society and there was a lengthy report of their conference (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, July 1939). The Society also sent representatives to the Mansion House Council on Health and Housing and several members attended their meetings (SWHEM, 1933).

The representation of SWHEM at official government committees has been discussed in Chapter Four. The Quarterly Bulletin for October 1936 also records

"A meeting of the Women's Housing Conference was held on 1st July, when it was decided to consider the possibilities of forming a Women's Advisory Housing Committee, in response to a suggestion made to delegates from the Conference at their meeting with the General Purposes and Technical Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee. A small sub-committee was appointed, with these terms of reference: "To draw up a constitution for a Women's Advisory Housing Committee, and to consider ways and means, and methods of propaganda." (Some results of the formation of this committee have been discussed in Chapter Four.)

One other activity which attracted attention over this time was the Sixth International Conference on scientific management. Miss Jeffery was the representative of SWHEM on the Women's Research Sub-Committee of this conference (SWHEM. Minutes. 13.1.34). Although the meetings, which were in the Domestic Section of the Congress, seem to have been largely related to scientific home management.

"Visits were arranged to the Estates in London connected with Women's Management, and many visitors distributed themselves on the Crown, the Duchy of Cornwall, and the St. Pancras House Improvement Society's Estates. Our members were glad to welcome several of our Dutch and American friends among the guests." (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. October 1935a)

In general, SWHEM seems to have been willing to co-operate with other women's organisations on demands connected with housing or employment. The Society was affiliated to the Women's Employment Federation (SWHEM. Minutes. 19.5.35). An approach in 1935 from the organising secretary of the Over Thirty Association to raise the question of housing accommodation for single working women was considered by the Council. It was

decided to inform her that SWHEM "viewed with sympathy any endeavour to meet this need" (SWHEM. Minutes. 16.11.35). However, a letter from the Women's Public Health Officers' Association asking SWHEM to send a representative to a meeting to consider the formation of a Federation of professional social workers did not meet with a very positive response, being 'left on the table' (SWHEM. Minutes. 14.7.34). The Women's Public Health Officers' Association was what later became the Health Visitors' Association. SWHEM's adverse reaction might have had some connection with the Women Housing Managers' mixed feelings about being linked with social workers. Certainly some interviewees said that they had not wished to go into social work and viewed housing management as rather different.

The Housing Centre was another housing body with which the Society started to co-operate over this period, beginning to publish a notice of their meetings and lunches in 1938 - in fact the two organisations were housed in the same building so co-operation was quite convenient (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. January 1938).

In its contact with these organisations, usually SWHEM gave and received support and avenues for further publicity. Its relationship with the Institute of Housing was more problematic however.

#### 5.6.4 The Institute of Housing Administration

This Institute was formed by another group of housing staff, initially those working for local authorities. "In 1931 the idea of forming the Institute originated

amongst a group of municipal housing managers in the Midlands who had been in the habit of holding informal meetings to discuss problems connected with management." (Hort. 1934) The inaugural meetings were attended by several members of SWHEM and Miss Moor, Miss Fenter and Miss Hort were members of the original executive committee of twelve. Wallace Smith, Estates Manager of Birmingham, was very much the moving spirit of the Institute and was elected each year until 1946 at least.

Initially, as can be seen from the information above, membership of the IHA and SWHEM was not felt to be incompatible. Miss Hort wrote an article for the Bulletin in which she argued for "the fullest possible co-operation and harmony between the two bodies" though she realised that this would require "tact and forbearance" (Hort. 1934). These two qualities were not perhaps present for, by April 1934, Quarterly Bulletin reported signs of strain.

"At the informal meeting of the members on Sunday morning the attitude of the Society to the Institute of Housing Administration was discussed. It was revealed that the Institute is not so large as some of us thought, its membership being at present about 150. A committee has been appointed to consider subjects for an examination by which future members will be admitted to the Institute, and two of our members are sitting on this committee. A paper written by Mr. Wallace Smith, of Birmingham, was discussed, in which he stated that in his view women should only be employed on housing estates as social workers, to "work up" the bad tenants; the number of these he estimated to be 10%. Miss Alford said that we might accept this theory as reasonable and practical, but only when and if an estate contained a low proportion of bad tenants; even then, it would make difficulties both for the tenant and the social worker, as all the neighbours would know that when the latter called on a tenant, it was because the tenant was considered below standard. On an estate run on Octavia Hill principles this difficulty need not occur. If the estate contained a large proportion of tenants needing special supervision,

this theory of management would be quite impracticable.

"It was felt by those present that the Society should wait for future developments, and that no definite action need be taken at present towards the Institute. A resolution was passed to this effect, individual members being still free to join the Institute if they wish to do so." (Gold. 1934)

The Institute of Housing Administration was obviously not so keen on propaganda for trained women housing managers.

"Miss Philipp reports from West Bromwich that she attended a meeting of the Midland Branch committee of the Institute of Housing Administration on Tuesday, June 18th. The meeting was called to discuss a resolution from the London committee of the Institute to the following effects:-

- (a) That the frequent reference in the Ministry of Health circulars and reports to Women Estate Managers is prejudicial to the interests of male members.
- (b) That the minimum remuneration of Women Property Managers referred to in the Ministry of Labour circular "Choice of Careers Series No. 4.a." dated February 5th. 1932. is not being paid in many instances.

"Miss Philipp spoke on the resolution, saying, among other things, that she would suggest that the Institute ought to be pleased that the Ministry stressed the importance of appointing "fully qualified housing managers", as she was under the impression that the Institute was formed to improve the standard and status of housing officials throughout the country - to this the rest of the committee agreed.

"She suggested that the Ministry probably stressed Women Housing Estate Managers simply because our Society was the only one having a training scheme; and that when the Institute has a training scheme the Ministry should be informed of the fact.

"She told them that the Society had passed a resolution that fully qualified managers should not apply for posts advertised at low salaries.

"After an interesting discussion the committee passed a resolution to the effect that the Midland Branch of the I.H.A. did not consider the reference (as above) detrimental to the male applicant, providing that the woman was fully qualified (including examinations); and urging the executive of their Institute to hurry on the preparation of the training scheme and to bring the existence of the I.H.A. to the notice of the Ministry.



"One much applauded remark, noted by Miss Philipp, was to the effect that it was impossible for any person, male or female, to be fully qualified even in three years." (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, October 1935)

Wallace Smith, who was president of the Institute and had great influence as the manager of a large authority, does not seem to have been in favour of women managers.

Relationships were probably not helped by an article in Municipal Journal of 20.4.1934 based on a "Memorandum upon Estate Management" (circulated for the information of delegates at the Regional Conferences of Local Authorities). This article described the office organisation and administrative work of the Birmingham Estates Department under the management of Mr. Wallace Smith.

"For rent collection the author does not oppose the Octavia Hill system, but personally prefers men as collectors and women as social workers.... By separating the work he finds that energies are more concentrated and a high degree of efficiency ensured.... Experience leads him to regard women as most capable of visiting prospective tenants but less satisfactory in visiting the installed tenants, yet the latter are ones for whom a woman's intelligent co-operation is needed..." (Municipal Journal. 20.4.34)

Such statements were hardly likely to have endeared him to the members of SWHEM. Further difficulties obviously ensued, for we read in the Minutes of January 1936, following letters from members (the contents of which are unfortunately unknown).

"That in view of the facts which have been brought to light Council is of the opinion that membership of the Institute of Housing Administration is rapidly becoming incompatible with membership of the SWHEM. Members of the latter body are, therefore, asked to consult together as to the most effective moment to resign in a body from the IHA." (SWHEM, Minutes. 3.1.36)

At a meeting on May 3rd 1936, the members of the Society who were also members of the Institute met and decided they would resign from the Institute within the next fortnight (SWHEM. Minutes. 3.5.36). From that time on the Institute was a very male dominated organisation. For example, the 1936 Council, the first recorded, was all male and the first woman executive member was not elected until 1939. One woman member of the Institute Council remained the norm until 1948 (Institute of Housing, 1956). There does not seem to be evidence of any further co-operation between the Society and IHA in the period up to the Second World War.

#### 5.7 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Besides sending members to meetings with other organisations, the Society encouraged its members to go out to give talks to organisations of all kinds and to schools and other educational institutions. This work was so diverse that it is difficult to summarise it. Probably not all activity of this kind was recorded in the Quarterly Bulletin or even in the minutes, as members probably did not notify the Society of every talk given to schools for example. But a copy of the reports of meetings addressed in two successive copies of the Bulletin does give some idea of the range of organisations and activity involved. (Figure 5.3)

According to their audience, these talks could have specific purposes: gaining general social support for the employment of women housing managers (including support from other women's organisations), publicising housing as a career to potential recruits.

# FIGURE 5.3

## PUBLIC SPEAKING BY SOCIETY MEMBERS

April quarters 1934 and 1937

### 1934

Miss J. Sunderland:	National Women's Citizens Association, Chingford Branch. Central Employment Bureau; at a Conference on Social Work as a Career. The Marylebone Presbyterian Church, Women's Guild.
Miss Larke:	Rotarian Luncheon at Slough. Church Women's Fellowship.
Mrs. Catty:	N.C.W., Tunbridge Wells Branch Annual Meeting.
Mrs. Lyell:	Study Circle, Oxford.
Miss Fenter:	Toc. H. League of Women Helpers, Birmingham Rangers' Meeting, Birmingham. Woodbrooke Students. The Birmingham Settlement. Social Workers' Guild, Coventry. C.O.S. Annual Meeting (Midland) at Shrewsbury.
Miss Murray:	N.C.W., London Branch.
Miss Galtor:	N.C.W., Watford Branch.
Miss Jeffery:	N.C.W., Folkestone Branch.
Miss Hurst:	College of Nursing, Health Visitor Students.
Miss J. Thompson:	Institute of Housing Administration, Northern Area. Sherborne Girls' School.
Miss Taylor:	Bootle Housing Committee.
Miss Samuel:	Institute of Housing Administration, Midland Area (Extracts from Miss Hort's paper are given in the Bulletin).
Miss Hort:	The Wisbech Centre of the Women's Institute. Worthing Women's Luncheon Club. Meeting for Unitarian and other Liberal Christian Women. Kensington Housing Association (Earls Court Branch).
Miss Bland:	
Miss Upcott:	

### 1937

- Miss Thompson, February, broadcast in "Value for Money" Series. National Programme.
- Miss Darling, January, Members of L.C.C. Almoners' Association.
- Miss Seddon, January, Social Welfare Club, Tyldesley.
- Mrs. Barclay, February, Women's Freedom League, Wimbledon.
- Mrs. Berry, February, Women Students, University College, Southampton.
- Miss Fenter, February, Leamington and Warwick Soroptimist Club.
- Miss Jeffery, February, Governors of Yorkshire Loan Training Fund, Annual Meeting.
- Miss Jeffery, February, Housing Centre.
- Miss Upcott, February, Sheffield N.C.W.
- Miss Upcott, March, Berkhamsted N.C.W.

Source : SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin (No. V) April 1934  
SWHEM Quarterly Bulletin (No. XVII) April 1937

Even the relatively new medium of broadcasting was used. "Women's Management has also been the subject of B.B.C. talks and has been introduced into films, conspicuously that produced by the Under Forty Club." (SWHEM. 1934a: 3)

This activity does seem to have had some significance in encouraging recruitment since several interviewees had heard about housing work in this way. "I heard Miss Y speak at an old girls' do." "I heard a talk at school by a member of the Society." This aspect of the work was regarded seriously by the members of the Society and there was a suggestion that training could be provided.

#### "Suggested Speakers Class

"Requests for speakers on Housing Management are continually being received at the office from organisations of every description... But at present speakers are hard to find and the few who are available are called upon far too often. An opportunity now presents itself, for London members at least, to acquire the technique of public speaking or to improve their existing ability under expert guidance. Miss E. Halton is willing to give a tuition course on public speaking extending over 6 lectures for a nominal fee of half a crown." (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin, October 1935)

Besides publicising the work of the Society this activity obviously gave members useful experience in public speaking, an asset in a career in housing and one in which women tend to have less experience than men.

## 5.8 CONTACTS WITH EMPLOYERS

### 5.8.1 The Society's Role

Initiating contacts with individual employers, responding to requests for information from them in a very positive way, and arguing the case for the employment of women were obviously very important activities for the Society if it wanted to survive. All the activities described so far - written publications, contact with organisations, public speaking - helped with this work of contacting employers but a great deal was also done on a specific or individual basis. In this work, contact with certain influential men was also significant.

It was important to get the existence of the Society and of women housing managers known to potential employers so, in 1933, the Executive recommended that

"a sub-committee be formed to deal with the extension of the work in relation to Trusts and other branches of Private enterprise; that it is recommended that the Ministry of Health be approached to supply a list of municipalities developing housing schemes under the 1930 Act and that such authorities be approached by the Society on the advantage of employing women housing estate managers." (SWHEM. Minutes. 8.7.33)

In 1934 it was resolved that where enquiries were made by potential employers, if they were in London the Secretary should try to obtain an interview, if in the provinces a member and the enquirer should be encouraged to see round some of the estates managed by members (SWHEM. Minutes. 10.9.33). Considerable time was spent, both by the Committees of the Institute and by individual members, on these contacts since showing enquiring employers estates already managed by women was obviously regarded as a good selling point. Thus, for example, in one report in 1933

it is mentioned that, in response to an enquiry from Chelsea, London, a sub-committee was formed to answer specific questions and an agreement was reached over the salaries to be quoted for a manager and an assistant: Miss Thompson reported on a visit of a deputation from Shipley to Rotherham and Misses Baskett and Alford on visits from a deputation from Barnes Corporation, London to the Boroughs of Westminster and Kensington (SWHEM. Minutes. 28.10.33). Besides encouraging the employment of women managers, the Society publicised vacancies to its members and acted in an almost trade union role in negotiating salaries. Such negotiations were obviously important in maintaining status for the women managers and avoiding their relegation to the welfare ghetto. Some examples of the Society's contacts are given below.

#### 5.8.2 Examples of Negotiations with Employers

##### Lancaster

The initial contact with Lancaster is not recorded but, in 1933, a deputation visited an estate managed by women

##### "House Management

"The Lancaster Corporation have received a report from a deputation which recently investigated the operation of the "Octavia Hill" system of house management at Chester, Chesterfield and Westminster, but have deferred consideration of the matter. The deputation, whilst being of the opinion that the conditions met with in the various towns visited were not quite analogous to those in Lancaster, were convinced that the results obtained by this system had thoroughly justified its adoption, and that as a method of management for dealing more particularly with slum-clearance schemes it was one which they recommended in the event of such schemes being proceeded with in Lancaster." (Municipal Journal. 10.3.33b)

In 1934 Miss Samuel, one of the senior members of the Society, reported on an address to Lancaster Housing

Committee. By September 1934 Anne Baynes had been appointed as 'woman housing manager'. Anne Baynes, a Society member, had been working at Chesterfield (Baynes, 1935). Lancaster became an important training office.

#### Chelsea

It has been noted above that the Society had formed a sub-committee in response to the enquiry from Chelsea. This sub-committee drew up detailed conditions of service:

"Chelsea. Except for one or two minor alterations, the Chelsea Council accepted the conditions of service drawn up by the Sub-Committee of S.W.H.E.M. and the post of Manager was circulated on the agreed terms to members of S.W.H.E.M. only" (SWHEM. Minutes. 14.4.34).

Miss Jean Darling was appointed as Manager (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. April 1934b) and was influential in the Society. Even in 1948, Chelsea was still "almost an all woman office" (Interviewee).

#### Croydon

In 1934

"Correspondence had passed between the Town Clerk of Croydon and the Society and a deputation of three Councillors and the Town Clerk of that borough had been received by the Town Clerk of Westminster; Miss Baskett was present. The Secretary had drawn up an advertisement which was sent to the Town Clerk for his approval and insertion in the Municipal Journal." (SWHEM. Minutes. 14.4.34)

Katherine Dorrell, a member of the Society, was appointed Woman Housing Estate Manager (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. July 1934a). The minutes specifically mentioned the role of Parker Morris, then Town Clerk of Westminster. One or two of the older interviewees also mentioned Parker Morris' role in publicising and supporting the role of women managers particularly through the "Town Clerk's network".

Croydon also brings out a mention of the role of another Chief Officer.

#### "Croydon

"Mr. C. H. Walker, Housing Director of Bolton, has been appointed as Valuer to the County Borough of Croydon. Mr. Walker has for a long time been a supporter of our work and at both Norwich and Bolton, where he has held posts, he has secured the appointment of Octavia Hill trained women.

"His new appointment is to a newly created principal officer's post and will include Valuation for Rating and Compulsory Purchase, as well as general supervision of the administration of the Housing Estates. His appointment is especially interesting, as there has been a Woman Estate Manager at Croydon for the past year, in charge of the Slum Clearance work, and the discussion on a considerable extension of her sphere of work is being held over until after the new Valuer takes up his duties." (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, October 1935)

Once again the appointment was initially for slum clearance work.

#### Southall

In 1937

"Southall. The Town Clerk enquired whether there would be any objections to a woman manager being attached to the Medical Officer of Health's Department. Agreed that there would be no objection, provided the manager had access to the Housing Committee." (SWHEM, Minutes, 9.1.37)

and later

"Southall. Reported that Miss Darling and Miss Alford had interviewed the housing committee on February 4th. A letter was read from the Town Clerk with regard to the Housing Committee's recommendation of the appointment of a housing manager and two assistants." (SWHEM, Minutes, 13.2.37)

As we have seen in Chapter Four, Jean Thompson, who was appointed to Southall, found the arrangement particularly satisfactory.



Besides negotiating with local authorities, the Society also negotiated with Trusts and private employers.

#### Aubrey Trust

In 1933, with regard to some discussions with the Aubrey Trust, the Executive

"Recommend that a draft of a circular letter to members be drawn up to be submitted to the Trustees of the above, and to be on the following lines: applications to be invited for the position of a manager, fully qualified on Octavia Hill lines of management, for the management of the property of the above Trust, together with the duties of a secretary to the Trust. Details of the property to be managed to be given and a salary of 250 per annum. (SWHEM. Minutes. 8.7.33)

#### 5.8.3 Channels of Influence

The contacts with individual employers have been described because they demonstrate how different influences could help to bring about the appointment of women housing managers. In particular, they throw a little light on the matter of personal influence, which is always a difficult one to illuminate. In general, people are more easily persuaded to try something new if they are introduced to it by someone of status whom they respect (see, for example, Argyle, 1967: 30). It is clear that Parker Morris and Mr. C. H. Walker were acting in this role. Parker Morris in particular was mentioned by one or two of the older interviewees as being influential and using his contacts other town clerks to encourage the appointment of women housing managers. He was also the Society's solicitor and, as we have seen, gave them broad advice. The use of the "Town Clerk's network" would have been particularly important since, in the absence of any other arrangements, housing management

was often the responsibility of the Town Clerk's department.

It is likely that these recorded instances are only the 'tip of the iceberg' of personal influence because they are likely to be recorded only 'in passing'. For example, another 'helper' comes to light via an obituary.

"Sir Stanford Downing. The death of Sir Stanford Downing...has meant a personal loss to many which can only be estimated by those who knew him. His passing is a great loss to all Octavia Hill workers, for to him, perhaps more than to any other individual, is due the recent growth of the work in the provinces and elsewhere.

"As Assistant Secretary (under Sir Alfred de Bock Porter) he had known Miss Octavia Hill and her work, and, at her death in 1912, the new appointments to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' Estates came through him. In later years, I believe I am right in saying that he wrote personally and fully to enquiring chairmen of housing Committees, giving facts and figures, which coming from the Ecclesiastical Commission, carried conviction."  
(J.S.. SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin, October 1933)

Similarly, an obituary in July 1934 acknowledges the contribution of Sir George Duckworth at the Ministry of Munitions, and traces his connections with the Women Housing Managers.

"Sir George Duckworth. The death of Sir George Duckworth deprives women managers of a staunch and sympathetic friend. Himself for many years the owner of one house as a contribution to the work of Miss Octavia Hill, he as Controller of Housing under the Ministry of Munitions furthered the appointment of women Managers. He not only approved, but understood our methods. Although he showed every confidence in his managers he saw and decided things for himself. When he appeared in the Dudley office about 11 a.m. after travelling from London and was asked if he would like to go round the Estate he said, "Thank you, I have done that already." His conferences of Superintendents suggested the institution of the Municipal Managers' Conferences which in another form we still enjoy. When post-War conditions brought the appointment of women to an end he wrote, "It was, as you know, a peculiar trial to me not to be allowed to extend the Octavia Hill system to our other properties."

"Members of the A.W.H.P.M. will remember his regular attendance at their meetings, his cool courage at being the only man present, and the amusement caused by his insistence on safeguarding the Trust Funds from the possible depredation of the Honorary officials.

"To see his beautiful handwriting was to be assured of sympathy with past Housing work or encouragement for future. The Society of Women Housing Estate Managers has to mourn one who was literally an ornament to any movement to which he gave his support." (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, July 1934c)

By the nature of things, informal personal contact is likely to be less recorded than formal delegations and visits, but it is likely that many of the enquiries coming to the Society came from an initial informal discussion with members of officers of authorities where women housing managers were employed. Hence also the importance of members of SWHEM participating in bodies such as the National Housing and Town Planning Council where new contacts could be made.

A speech by Parker Morris in 1936 is of particular interest because it sums up much of the publicity work which has been described in this Chapter.

"Mr. Parker Morris outlined the following possible lines of development.

"1. He stressed the need and importance of individual work. Members must not rely solely on the Society and its committees to forward our claims. They should attend Housing conferences and Meetings whenever possible. - he mentioned particularly the Housing and Town Planning Council. Managers should read papers and speak in discussions whenever and wherever the opportunity occurred. He spoke also of the value of an annual report of the Manager's work, presented to their Councils or Housing Committees, and suggested that these might often be printed and used as propaganda.

"2. Our own conferences could be used to interest people in our work, by means of public sessions, and he suggested that we might have more group conferences.

"3. Members should write articles for the press on Octavia Hill work and on Housing problems in general. The Society could also use the Press for publicity by notifying them of meetings, by sending reports, and by inviting their representatives to attend public sessions of our own conferences. While the national press would help us most, we should not ignore the usefulness of local newspapers. Mr. Parker Morris also suggested that we should use the Quarterly Bulletin for publicity purposes.

"4. The Society should make use of Women's organisations and papers: we should approach their Headquarters and their local Headquarters, and he gave as examples the Local Council of Social Service, and the Women's Institutes. These organisations can stir up interest, and can hold meetings, and approach Local Authorities.

"5. Mr. Parker Morris thought that we should make more use of our friends outside the Society, and mentioned the names of various members of Local Authorities, Town Clerks, Medical Officers of Health, Members of Parliament, and Housing Authorities. He said that we must not hesitate to be exacting, and that we should establish closer contacts between the Society and our friends, so that the latter would be better able to help us.

"6. We should use our Secretary for Publicity work, and should not overburden her with office routine and petty details, but should give her time to think and plan for the good of the Society." (SWHEM, Quarterly Bulletin, January 1936b)

This speech seems to show a very concerted plan of campaign, though it can be seen from this and the previous Chapter that much of it is a codification of existing practice. Nevertheless it is interesting that it was Parker Morris who produced this formulation.

One other aspect which seems particularly worthy of note is the Society's very active interest in pay and conditions. Instances such as the Aubrey Trust and Chelsea ones quoted above are not uncommon. The Society was very anxious to avoid women managers being appointed without sufficient authority or treated as cheap labour

or demoted to the status of welfare assistants. The importance of this can be seen in the discussion with the Institute of Housing and Wallace Smith's comments (Section 5.6.4). Interviewees felt later that Society members had been too prepared to work for too little money, but the Society had a job at the beginning to keep the rate of pay up for these "women's jobs".

## 5.9 OVERSEAS CONTACTS

Octavia Hill had already in her day been recognised internationally for her work in housing management and had made many contacts overseas especially in the USA and Holland (Hill. 1956: 184, 185).

These contacts were continued and extended by the Society, both in receiving visitors and in individual member's or official visits abroad and in publishing reports in the journal. This Section describes the contacts with two countries mentioned frequently - USA and South Africa - and looks briefly at some of the others.

### USA

"In 1934, the National Association of Housing Officials, Chicago, requested Sir Raymond Unwin, P.P.R.I.B.A., to lead a team of lecturers on housing matters to the United States of America in the early Autumn of 1934, in connection with the development of President Roosevelt's housing programme." (SWHEM. 1934b)

Miss Samuel (a member of the Executive of SWHEM and the person who had pioneered the work in Bebington) accepted an invitation to take part in this tour and addressed the Society on her return (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin, July 1935).

There was considerable correspondence with housing organisations in the USA. For example, the Report of Executive to Council for the period January to April 1934 notes letters from:

Brooklyn Garden Apartments (New York)  
Welfare Council of New York City  
Lavanburg Foundation (New York)  
Managing Editor. Public Administration. New York  
National Association of Housing Officials (Chicago)  
(SWHEM. Minutes. 14.4.34)

The July 1934 Quarterly Bulletin reported "Miss M. E. Hort has kindly undertaken to deal on behalf of the Society with the growing correspondence with America" (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. July 1934b).

In 1936 the first student from the USA began training with the Society. In the summer of 1936 the secretary paid a visit to the USA, making contacts with housing officials and lecturing on the Octavia Hill system of housing management in seven large cities. This tour continued the work begun in 1934 and also broke new ground in San Francisco and Los Angeles (SWHEM. 1936). This visit led to further correspondence with bodies in the USA and to visits from housing officials and another student from USA (SWHEM. 1937).

#### South Africa

In January 1934, an unofficial representative of the Cape Town municipal authority (Mr. Hankey) asked the Society to draw up a list of questions which they would like answered by the Cape Town municipal authority before considering the appointment of a manager (SWHEM. Minutes. 14.4.34). Preliminary negotiations being satisfactorily

completed. Miss Margaret Hurst, later Mrs. Margaret ("Peggy") Hill, was appointed

"to assist in Housing Administration under Cape Town City Council, her especial work being the development of the Octavia Hill system in Cape Town and the training on these lines of European and non-European women" (SWHEM, 1934b)

Apparently it had been the Women's Municipal Association in Cape Town who had first suggested the appointment of a woman housing manager to the Municipality (The Times, October 8th 1934). The appointment of a young (aged 26) Englishwoman to manage property in Cape Town did not pass without comment in the local press (Cape Argus, 1935), and there were some doubts about her capability to deal with such a difficult situation. In fact it proved possible to establish contact with the tenants by regular visiting (though it was not possible for a woman to collect rents), to interview applicants and to visit acquired slum property, to begin to train South African women for the work of housing management (Hurst, 1937), and to carry out considerable publicity for Octavia Hill work (for example, Cape Argus, 1935).

In December 1935 a student from South Africa came to undertake a year's practical training with the Society and to study for the Sanitary Science certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute and she was followed by another student (SWHEM, 1936).

Miss Hurst returned from Cape Town at the conclusion of her contract in October 1937 but her successor was also a member of the Society (Miss Crickmay). Also agreement was reached on the appointment of a woman housing manager

to the municipality of East London and to Johannesburg, and these were taken up by Miss Gold and Miss Miskin respectively (SWHEM. 1937. SWHM. 1938:8).

Visitors from a number of other countries were in touch with the Society from time to time, for example "Visitors have also been received from Australia, Czecho-slovakia, Palestine and Sweden" (SWHM. 1939). Despite hopes of building up employment in Australia, however, South Africa remained the only contact offering employment in this period (Ratcliffe. 1939). There were contacts with Germany (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. October 1933a), France (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. July 1934) and Denmark (SWHEM. Quarterly Bulletin. July 1934e). The Society was particularly interested in Holland, where work had been started after an early contact with Octavia Hill (Hill. 1956). Not all Society members were in agreement with what was known as the 'Dutch System' of separating the really bad tenants into a 'control' under strict supervision which included "frequent inspections of the house and compulsory weekly baths for all inmates" (HRT. October 1937).

Overseas contacts obviously only provided a limited source of employment - mainly in South Africa at this stage. However, sometimes these appointments could be significant steps for the individual concerned. Margaret Hill, who was the first appointment to South Africa, later returned to England, worked for the Ministry of Supply and, in 1943, was appointed the first housing management adviser to the Ministry of Health (Interview).



Besides employment, overseas contacts also provided information, strengthened the 'network' of women involved in housing and, last but not least, added to the prestige of the Society.

#### 5.10 CONCLUSIONS

This Chapter and the previous one have shown that women faced considerable difficulties in expanding their employment in housing organisations in the 1930s. Opposition to their employment could arise on various grounds: because women had not been in those organisations before, because they were not seen as acceptable in more senior posts (especially in charge of men), because they were not seen as competent in dealing with the technical side of the work or with larger organisations or, quite simply, on the grounds that employment should be given to men when there was so much unemployment.

It is argued that the Society played a vital part in expanding women's employment in housing. It managed to organise itself and reconcile the different factions sufficiently to present a united front. It provided its women members with a type of organisation which tried to encourage a fairly wide participation and organised meetings which were congenial to its members and encouraged a feeling of belonging. This would be important in reducing the feelings of isolation of women who were pioneering posts in often difficult situations. Because its training and recruitment were closely controlled, the Society members formed a fairly coherent group: the type of training given was conducive to the

passing on of values and attitudes. Training in two offices at least encouraged the building up of a network of acquaintances within the Society which would be supportive. The Quarterly Bulletin also was geared to keeping members in touch with each other and with the proceedings of the Council of the Society.

While many of its activities were usual ones for an organisation of that type, the Society pursued publicity and contacts with employers particularly energetically. The various publications helped to spread information about the women housing managers, encourage recruitment and prepare the ground for employment opportunities. Contacts with other women's organisations helped to share knowledge and gain support both for particular housing policies and the employment of women managers. Contact with other housing and local government bodies provided further publicity and chances to meet potential employers. Public speaking to a broad range of organisations fulfilled similar purposes and the overseas contacts brought some possibilities of employment, knowledge of new developments and increased prestige.

The work that the Society undertook in contacts with individual employers was obviously important in translating tentative enquiries into actual employment. The stand which the Society took particularly about conditions of employment and salaries was important in stiffening the resolve of women who, knowing they were in a weak position, might have accepted posts with lower salaries and insufficient scope.

In all these ways therefore the Society was an important element in encouraging the employment of women housing managers. But in doing so it was often forced to use an argument of "special aptitude" of women for the work, which implicitly reinforced stereotyped attitudes to the capabilities of women. In addition, some of the Society's advantages could be turned to disadvantages. The fact that the Society was wedded to a particular form of management which could be seen as paternalistic meant that they were vulnerable to attack from the Left. The form of training which so well socialised students was also one which was a complete block to any really substantial expansion in numbers. Even the existence of an all women's Society which could campaign so well for the employment of women meant that all the men employed in housing, including the most able and the heads of the largest organisations, automatically had had to join a different organisation with which there was little contact. However, in summing up, it seems fair, after an examination of the difficulties which women faced in housing employment in the 1930s, to conclude that it is unlikely that women would have made as much progress, particularly in local authority employment, without the energetic work of the Society.

## CHAPTER 5

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## CHAPTER 6

### 6 THE WAR YEARS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

A number of histories of housing pay surprisingly little attention to the war years. Burnett's social history of housing (1978), for example, moves straight from describing housing in 1939 to trends from 1945 onwards with hardly a mention of the war. Merrett (1979) gives a little attention to what happened during the war, but Berry (1974) devotes just half a page to its effects. Some of the earlier books, for example Donnison (1961), give much more attention to the effects of war trends than to what happened during the war.

The major source for the war period is therefore Titmuss' Problems of Social Policy (1950) which draws extensively on Public Record Office papers. Some of the other social histories dealing with the war, for example Calder (1969), seem to have drawn on one or other of these two sources. One other type of source is the more popular histories including those using the Mass-Observation archive, such as Harrison (1978), but while these contain some useful data they are not usually a suitable source for information about administration.

While Titmuss is invaluable as a source, one disadvantage is that it was written from a general social policy point of view. Some aspects of housing, such as evacuation, are well covered, while others, such as repairs and housing administration and management, are less well covered.

Because there is, therefore, no existing continuous narrative about housing during the war, the attempt has been made here to fill out the background in a little more detail, using the sources mentioned above, particularly Titmuss, plus official, mainly Public Record Office, data and information from SWHM sources. This narrative is incomplete, particularly as regards the practicalities of administration because there is no solid infrastructure of local studies of housing during the war on which to build. It could be argued that one reason why the history of housing during the war has been ignored is that housing historians tend to be much concerned with new building: administration and management have not received much attention. During the war new building almost stopped. But, as we shall see, changes did have to be made in the local administration of housing to cope with war conditions.

The first four Sections of this Chapter, therefore, attempt to outline the major factors affecting housing before, during and after the blitz of 1940. The Chapter then goes on to look at the nature of the work done by women managers during the war at local government and at central government level. The way in which the Society dealt with issues of women's employment during this period is then discussed. Finally, the organisation of the Society and the remainder of its work, including work on reconstruction, are described. The Chapter will show how the war period provided the women housing managers with many opportunities but will also discuss the limitations of the gains made over this period.

## 6.2 PREPARATIONS FOR THE WAR

Titmuss (1950: 3) points out that

"The wide range of emergency services, which came into operation in the early days of the war...had behind them a long history of ministerial and departmental planning and discussion."

As far as housing was concerned this planning was inadequate for three main reasons. First of all the effects of bombing in the destruction of housing and the social consequences of homelessness were underestimated, despite evidence from the Spanish Civil War (Titmuss, 1950: 48). Secondly the expected problems of panic and loss of morale by the civilian population focused government's attention on the need for evacuation from the major cities, especially London (Titmuss, 1950: 12-22). The need for services to deal with those "bombed out" was not accurately foreseen and this lack of preparation was aggravated by the number of local authorities involved. Thirdly, the Treasury was reluctant to commit money to the preparations and so were local authorities: progress was slow while arguments between the two were prolonged (Titmuss, 1950: 52). In 1938, after the Munich crisis, there was considerable disquiet over the level of preparation and the responsibility for evacuation plans was given to the Ministry of Health. The department made efforts to work out the plans on a practical basis and to prepare local authorities to carry them out (Titmuss, 1950: 32-53). The plans dealt with two main functions: evacuation and care of the homeless.

### 6.2.1 Evacuation

The country was divided into three zones for evacuation purposes - evacuation, neutral and reception. It was decided that certain groups would be given priority for evacuation:

1. Schoolchildren, removed as school units under charge of their teachers;
2. Younger children, accompanied by their mothers or some other responsible person;
3. Expectant mothers;
4. Adult blind and cripples whose removal was feasible.

Evacuation itself was to be voluntary, but the scheme rested on finding accommodation for the evacuees by compulsory billeting in private houses despite the fact that this had always been an extremely unpopular idea in England. A very limited number of camps were built for those it might be difficult to billet (Titmuss, 1950: 35.36).

Some people were in fact organising their own evacuation, "reserving" billets, which complicated the job of calculating where to evacuate people. A large scale survey of housing accommodation was carried out but the fear of air raids and the need to get people out of London quickly overrode considerations of the problems that lay at the other end of the journey - reception, billeting and welfare (Titmuss, 1950: 38-44).

The local authorities responsible for applying the plans and working them out in detail were the town or district councils. In London, the LCC co-ordinated the boroughs'

plans and those of some of the surrounding areas. In the reception areas the responsibility had been given to the councils of Boroughs and County Districts, though the County Council occupied the position of "co-ordinating" billeting authority (Ministry of Health, 1942a).

#### 6.2.2 The care of the homeless

It had been realised that it would be necessary to give practical help, as quickly and smoothly as possible, to those who were made homeless by enemy action, and these arrangements were finally codified in the booklet "The care of the homeless" (Ministry of Health, 1944).

This help involved relief in money terms, for which a national scheme was devised, and "relief in kind" which is what we will be concerned with here. Because of the underestimation of the effects of war, no specific proposals were made about the care of homeless people. The Air Raid Precautions Department was supposed to be covering the whole field so other departments did not think it their responsibility (Titmuss, 1950: 48).

Departmental responsibility for the care of the homeless was not finally settled until after Munich when responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Health.

Even in 1939 deliberations were still coloured by the idea of a mass exodus from London. The plan was for emergency stations providing food and drink and temporary shelter with few facilities. The hope was that rehousing would be provided by friends and neighbours (Titmuss, 1950: 50.51). Responsibility for any public rehousing

provision was given to the public assistance authorities (Titmuss, 1950: 50.51). This was unfortunate because these authorities had strong traditions of very careful administration of public money. Their standard was very variable and the actions of some were dominated by a desire to avoid a charge on the rates (Titmuss, 1950: 52).

The other party to the financial arrangements, the Treasury, was equally anxious to avoid wrongful use of public money. Under the scheme, the local authorities were to be responsible for their own residents, since the Treasury argued that it was the duty of public assistance authorities to relieve destitution. The Treasury was to pay for the homeless and panic stricken who crossed the boundaries of public assistance authorities.

"When it became clear [in 1939] that the local authorities were reluctant to accept this arrangement...the Ministry of Health was empowered to give a general assurance that if the burden on the rates became too heavy some financial assistance would be forthcoming. But the local authorities were not satisfied with this assurance." (Titmuss, 1950: 52.53)

Their attitude is understandable when it is seen that these arrangements meant distinguishing all the time between expenditure incurred on "natives" and on "immigrants". This also meant that, for many items of expenditure, sanction would first have to be obtained from the central department and their attitude might not be generous. For example, in July 1939 the London County Council asked to be allowed to purchase blankets, but its request was refused on the grounds that blankets would tempt people to remain in the rest centres for longer than necessary (Titmuss, 1950: 53). With such

arrangements it is not surprising that many local authorities were slow to make provision for the homeless.

### 6.3 THE FIRST EVACUATION AND THE PHONEY WAR

Plans had been made for the evacuation of three million women and children (Ministry of Health, 1940a). But when the order for evacuation was given in Cabinet on 31st August 1939, preparations in the reception areas were most inadequate. The transport arrangements worked reasonably well but with some confusion: the standard of reception varied but, for many, provided a rather disturbing experience. The difference of culture and standard of living between the evacuees and their hosts began to produce intense strains in many cases, particularly in the case of mothers who had been evacuated with their children. This part of the war's social history became well documented so time will not be spent on it here (for example, Ministry of Health, 1941a; Women's Group on Public Welfare, 1943; Boyd, W. (Ed): Evacuation in Scotland, 1944).

The effects of the difficulties over the first evacuation were threefold. First of all, time had to be spent re-allocating evacuees among increasingly unwilling hosts. Secondly, evacuees began at a very early stage to return to London. Thirdly, later government plans for evacuation were modified by this experience but, because the voluntary principle was adhered to, it was never possible to get a very large scale take-up (Titmuss, 1950: 355-369). The return of evacuees who had not settled in the reception area was accentuated because this was the period of the "phoney war". The strains of



evacuation, both for guest and host, only seemed justifiable if there was actual air attack: in its absence the urge to return to the city and to family and friends proved too strong for many people (Titmuss, 1950: 138,139).

The original plans had been to evacuate 3 million people. In fact, Government removed 1,500,000 mothers and children from the target areas (Titmuss, 1950: 105). By the end of 1939, over 900,000 mothers and children had returned home, leaving only about 570,000 official evacuees still in the reception areas (Titmuss, 1950: 139). The government's plans had never included the idea of people returning home after evacuation: already the plans for the effects of air attack were going even further astray.

#### 6.4 THE BLITZ AND AFTER

"The period of air attack, which began in June 1940 as an intended preliminary to the invasion of Britain and ended a year later when Germany turned to the East, represented for local authorities the most severe trial of the whole war." (Titmuss, 1950: 239)

It was during this period that housing problems came to the fore. There were three separate though interlinked housing problems - the destruction or damage to houses by bombing, the need to evacuate and sometimes re-evacuate some of the civilian population, and the need to house relocated workers from factories essential to war production. We will look at the extent of each of these problems briefly in turn before going on to describe the arrangements made to cope with them.

#### 6.4.1 The destruction of housing by bombing

Except for one respite - 2nd November - between September and November 1940. London was bombed continuously for 76 nights. There was widespread destruction particularly in the East End of London (Titmuss, 1950: 257, 258).

2,250,000 people in the UK were made homeless during the raids of 1940-41. Of these, 1,400,000 were in London - one in six of the population. Homelessness on this scale had not been foreseen by the government (Titmuss, 1950: 273). The lack of preparation resulted in appalling conditions in overcrowded and underprovided rest centres and shelters. A variety of responses began to occur. People took the initiative in opening up London tube stations as temporary shelters. During the worst of the raids, people "trekked" particularly out of London to sleep anywhere they could find in the country but this phenomenon receded as better arrangements were made (Harrison, 1978, chs 5, 6 & 7). Other temporary measures were also not successful - the hurried transfer of population from the East End to Central and West London was doomed not to be a lasting solution (Titmuss, 1950: 259). Housing managers would be very well aware of this.

"And then...at the end of the year, the first bad night we had in London, we really had to take on rehousing. First of all people from the East End all were sent over to Kensington, that first bad night. And that was a great mistake because the second night we had had bombs in Kensington you see, and we had a great deal of trouble with the East Enders on that occasion because they thought they were going into the country you see and they'd only got as far as Kensington. So they had to be inveigled into property that we'd requisitioned. And then at the end of the time, when we wanted them to go out they didn't want to leave." (Interviewee, London housing manager)

6.4.2      The need to evacuate civilian populations

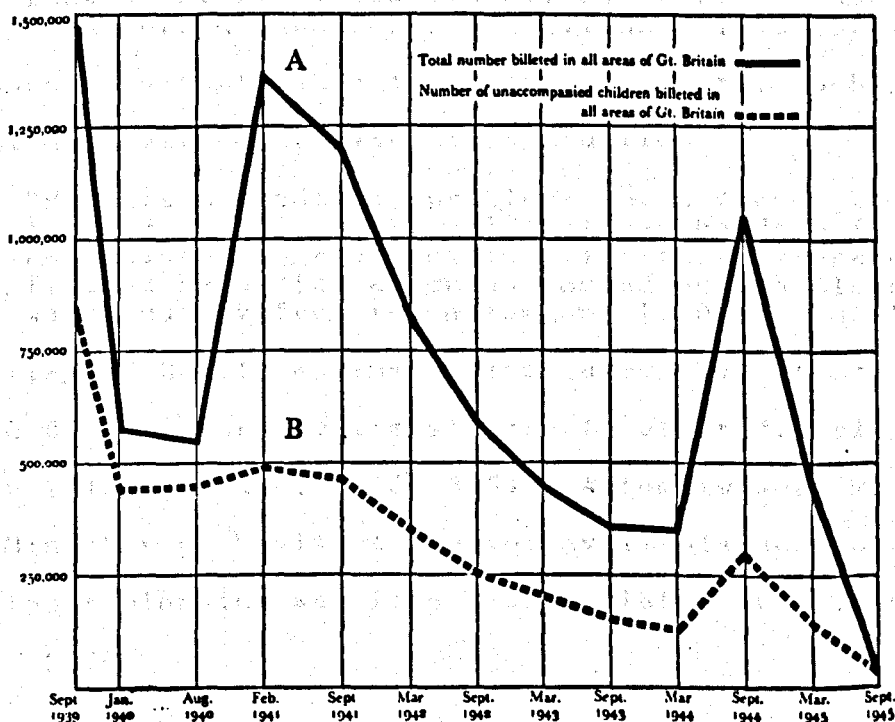
In the planning stage, the country had been zoned into evacuation, neutral and reception areas (Titmuss, 1950: 11). But problems occurred either because the designations had been faulty in the first place or because events made them so. As towns on the coast and other cities started to get heavily bombed, the designations of "evacuable" areas had to be altered (Titmuss, 1950: 362.363). Because of the previous difficulties over the evacuation of mothers and children, the Ministry of Health introduced a new "assisted private evacuation" scheme giving mothers of children under five, who could make their own private travel arrangements for evacuation, travel vouchers and billeting allowances (Titmuss, 1950: 360). In any case, Titmuss calculates that in this period more people had relocated themselves than had moved under the government's schemes (Titmuss, 1950: 263). The disadvantage of this private evacuation was that it could result in the overloading of certain areas, for example clashing with the need to house war workers (Titmuss, 1950: 364). Figure 6.1, taken from Titmuss, shows clearly the numerical fluctuation in evacuation. These ebbs and flows of evacuation were often rather incomprehensible to those experiencing them. Thus, a housing officer in a Borough which had previously been an evacuation area found

"When they thought there was going to be an invasion, they were going to evacuate all the South Coast and they settled where they were going and we were going to have Brighton...and we went into all this...we hadn't got any kosher butchers and, as there were a lot of Jews in Brighton...and this was all worked out by which trains they were going to come and we were going to have these coaches..we had a sort of dress rehearsal." (Interviewee, London area housing manager)

Since the local authority concerned was near to London and had received quite heavy bombing, its officers were somewhat puzzled by these evacuation plans.

FIGURE 6.1

### GOVERNMENT EVACUATION SCHEME 1939-45



<sup>1</sup> Chapter VII, appendix 2.

<sup>2</sup> Based on local counts of evacuees taken generally at six-monthly intervals throughout the war. The figures are given in appendix 9.

Source Titmuss 1950 : 356

#### 6.4.3 The need to accommodate war workers

"Early in 1941, another important factor had forced itself into all calculations of the house-room available for evacuees in the reception districts...As the new war factories in the west and north-west of England and in Wales entered the campaign for production, their appetite for workers, and in consequence for houses, increased. The Supply Departments' demands for both grew by leaps and bounds and the Ministry of Labour was asked to compel workers to transfer from other areas. But, as the Ministry said, compulsion was useless if there was nowhere for the workers to live when they moved. The attack then turned on the Ministry of Health and the local authorities whose responsibility it was to billet or find houses for transferred war workers." (Titmuss, 1950: 364)

Titmuss says that other transferred workers, such as hospital staff, aggravated the situation.

"Here is a bundle of problems which cannot be treated in this book: all that can be done is to emphasise the great complication of the task of finding homes for evacuees caused by the claims of war industry from the autumn of 1940 onwards."

Ministry of Health estimates indicated that at least 1.000.000 war workers transferred to other districts by March 1942 (Titmuss, 1950: 365). Attempts were made by the Ministry of Health to survey available accommodation but their planning was less than satisfactory (Titmuss, 1950: 365).

The Ministry of Aircraft Production, for example, was exasperated by the way the problem was being dealt with. Beaverbrook had been appointed to the Ministry in the Summer of 1940 to boost production (Calder, 1969: 146). Plans were made to build hostels for some workers plus married quarters, but this had to be co-ordinated with the demands of other Ministries. The Housing (War Requirements) Committee was set up in 1940 to decide how many new houses should be built to accommodate workers needed for new wartime factories and the civilian

personnel of Service departments. It agreed some schemes for completing houses started before the war by local authorities and small amounts of new building (Housing (War Requirements) Committee. 1940: Minutes 11.1.40).

The Air Ministry and the Ministry of Aircraft Production were not satisfied at its rate of progress. .pa

"[The Committee] is too much under the control of the Ministry of Health who insist on going through their lengthy procedure for getting to know the available lodging accommodation after we have learned by experience that none exists: who thereafter pander to hopelessly dilatory and evasive local authorities whose only object in life is to extract subsidies from the state and who don't mind whether the houses are finished before the war or after." (Dowall. 1940)

The problem was doubtless made worse by the fact that it was another committee (a ministerial sub-committee of the Home Policy Committee) which dealt with the respective priority of the billeting demands of the service departments, the Ministry of Supply, the civil service and the local authorities against existing accommodation (Housing (War Requirements) Committee. 1940: Minutes 19.1.40).

## 6.5 THE BLITZ AND AFTER - ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTIONS

### 6.5.1 Rest Centres

"The early history of the homeless services is not a very happy one but this was not altogether attributable to the local authorities. The scale and character of the problem presented by the homeless was not clearly envisaged before the outbreak of war and the provision to be made was, in consequence, not thought out beyond the elementary stage at which it was seen in terms of dealing with a panic exodus of refugees who would shortly be able to return home. The development of the services before the bombing in the autumn of 1940 was also badly prejudiced by uncertainty as to the financial position. Local authorities had been promised full reimbursement of costs incurred in feeding and sheltering refugees from other areas and certain financial assistance towards the cost of providing for homeless persons from their own areas but the amount in this latter case was not specified...It

was not until September, 1940, that it was agreed that expenditure on establishing rest centres should be fully reimbursed, and the expenditure on maintenance etc. was not recognised for reimbursement until early in 1941 when the service first began to take shape in its present form. For these reasons the homeless services had a bad start..." (Ministry of Health, 1942a)

The deficiencies of the arrangements for rest centres at the beginning of the Blitz led to public outcry which forced the government to take action. Within a few days of the first big raid, after the Chairman of the London County Council had complained bitterly that the post-raid services had been starved of money, the Minister gave the Council a free hand. Accommodation in rest centres for homeless people was to be expanded and equipment and paid or voluntary staff provided. From this time on the battle of the Treasury against one hundred per cent Exchequer subsidy was lost and in November 1940 this was finally agreed (Titmuss, 1950: 263,264).

"By the end of 1941 the transformation was complete. The bleak, inhospitable poor law standards of the centres in September 1940 had given way to good and kindly board and lodging, available without charge to the homeless victims of air attack." (Titmuss, 1950: 267)

Municipal Journal was able to describe this as a "highly organised and successful municipal service, and this organisation had been achieved between September and November 1940." (Municipal Journal, 1940) However, the improvement in the rest centres would not have been sufficient without tackling the next stage of the process, the rehousing of the homeless.

#### 6.5.2 Rehousing

Because the destruction caused by bombing had been underestimated, little thought had been given to rehousing

problems. The government seems to have initially assumed that people would either be able to return to their homes or be accommodated with relatives. But there were quite a number who could not solve their problems in this way and had nowhere to go from the rest centres and government became concerned that the system would seize up (Titmuss, 1950: 274). Government suggestions to the local authorities were not always practical.

"And then, the idea was that we must get people out of the rest centres, and this was so typical of the government, they said people just musn't stay in the rest centres for more than four days...and you must give them priority. Well, of course, if you gave them priority, everybody went to a rest centre in order to get housed, so we said very soon we must give everybody the same priority and you must tell anyone if you go away and stay with your friends. We will still house you, and then of course a lot of people did and they got a billeting allowance by going to friends..." (Interviewee, London housing manager)

In addition to the government's lack of preparation, problems were made worse by the large number of small local authorities and the fact that in London there were two tiers of local authorities concerned - 96 authorities in the London civil defence area alone (Titmuss, 1950: 274). But air raids and the needs of victims did not respect local government boundaries. Initially, local administration was under great strain and government seriously considered removing local government powers but it rejected the proposal (Titmuss, 1950: 275). It was clear that central government had itself contributed to the confusion - for example, provision of furniture for those bombed out was slow to be arranged. Rehousing the homeless was arduous, time-consuming and complicated (Titmuss, 1950: 281, 282). To deal with the crisis, H. U.



Willink\* was appointed as a special commissioner to co-ordinate services for London's homeless at the end of September 1940. He had delegated powers from the Minister of Health and was given a staff which included social workers and staff seconded from the LCC housing department (Titmuss, 1950: 286.287). This team set about administrative restructuring and information, exhortation and encouragement to the local authorities.

The new arrangements were formalised in a Ministry of Health London region circular. The functions of the metropolitan boroughs were defined as four: billeting, requisitioning, the salvage and supply of furniture and "welfare". The boroughs were told to appoint an executive rehousing officer to supervise the work under these four heads and to furnish the officer with sufficient full-time assistants. All expenditure would be reimbursed in full (Titmuss, 1950: 288). Local authorities were even allowed to take on new staff to deal with the work (Municipal Journal, 1940).

The Society of Women Housing Managers had been in touch with H. U. Willink (SWHM Minutes, 5.11.40). This seems to have had some effect since the minutes later record that four enquiries about the appointment of rehousing officers (Camberwell, Greenwich, Hampstead, Lewisham) had resulted from that interview (SWHM Minutes, 16.11.40).

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\* H. U. Willink had been called to the bar in 1920. In June 1940 he was returned as Conservative and National Government member for North Croydon. Three months later he became Commissioner for the London Region. He held this post until October 1943. In November 1943, he was appointed Minister of Health and remained in this post until 1945, working on the preparatory work for the setting up of the National Health Service (Roberts, 1978).

Titmuss describes how Willink had to see that the London Country Council on the one hand, and the smaller local authorities on the other, made effective use of the powers allocated to them respectively.

"...some members of the experienced housing staff of the London County Council were attached to the London regional office to reinforce the Ministry of Health insurance inspectors engaged on resettlement work. These officers had many duties: they had to raise the efficiency of borough rehousing staffs, to supervise the maintenance of housing for homeless people." (Titmuss, 1950: 287)

The process of clarifying functions, raising the efficiency of administrative and executive staffs continued. The work was extended when H. U. Willink began to appoint trained social workers (Titmuss, 1950: 289). An interviewee who gained an appointment to a London borough whose rehousing had been in some degree of chaos said

"the heavy bombing had begun and the rest centres were getting full...and this friend of mine...she'd been involved with a lot of housing...she always says that she started off my job in a sense because she was one of what they called Willink's Inspectors...he had "Willink's Young Ladies" they were called...and they were trying...because the boroughs were in an awful mess. so she told [the London borough] 'You'd better have trained housing managers.' So they advertised the job..." [and the interviewee got it].

The kind of amateur administration which the boroughs had been practising was described by another woman manager appointed at this time.

"I think the Ministry had said, you know, that you'd better get someone who knows something about housing...The work had been done by the librarian... assessing rents and requisitioning properties...the first thing the treasurer wanted was the arrears down (but the rent records were in such a state). So that, if you picked an arrear of say 50, and thought well now I'll go and see why they owe 50 you see you had about a week's work...I think we had a bit of a lull and we were able to go rushing round rearranging staff a bit you see." (Interviewee, London housing manager)

### 6.5.3 Information and administrative centres

Initially the homeless had been forced to go from one agency to another for assistance, trailing around in a state of shock and tiredness (Harrison, 1978: 154.155); Titmuss, 1950: 291). But Hackney and one or two other authorities quickly introduced the idea of a centre where all services were available and this was quickly picked up by central government (Ministry of Health, 1940b). On 5th October 1940, the Ministry of Health advised local authorities in the London region to establish one or other of these centres and the practice spread rapidly (Titmuss, 1950: 291.292).

An inter-departmental committee, set up to consider whether this system should be applied to the rest of the country, recommended that Administrative Centres should be adopted in all Metropolitan Boroughs and Information Centres elsewhere. Information centres provided advice and assistance in form-filling related to lost identity card, ration books and other documents, money for fare to the office of the Assistance Board, information on where to get travel vouchers, billeting certificates, where to go on questions of billeting, salvage of furniture and repairs. Administrative centres, in addition to these facilities, would have officers of the various departments in attendance so that assistance could be given immediately. It was recommended that voluntary workers should also be in attendance (Inter-departmental committee on provision of information and assistance after air raid damage, 1940). The report recommended that these centres should not be at the same place as the rest centres because this would confuse the public, but

members of the public did have a tendency to go to the rest centres hoping to get exactly that kind of advice (Harrison. 1978: 154.155). Once the administrative centres were established, it was recommended that the rehousing officer should visit the rest centres frequently. Reports on the administrative centres show that even in 1941 the standard was still variable but the rehousing service was always prominently represented (Ministry of Health. 1941b). In addition to the centres, the Ministry of Health became very active in providing posters and leaflets giving post-raid information (Harrison. 1976: 216.217: Ministry of Health. 1944: 26).

#### 6.5.4 Relationship between Central and Local government

The initial weakness of services for the homeless and the need for government intervention produced a much closer relationship between central and local government officers than had been usual in the past. Looking back after the war, Miss Thrupp, the manager of Mitcham, who received an OBE for her services during the war, described the arrangements for liaison between the Ministry and the local authority.

"Many housing managers became billeting and rehousing officers and, probably for the first time in their careers, came into direct contact with civil servants acting for the appropriate Ministry. This was an interesting development because, on the face of it...it might appear that the local councils were, so to speak, cut out of the picture...Mitcham was one of a group of contiguous boroughs and a civil servant, attached to the Ministry of Health, was the group rehousing officer."

"To him all problems relating to the circulars connected with "the bombed out" could be referred. During heavy bombing he called once a week on each authority, besides always being available on the telephone (when it was in order) both at his office and at home...he was always present at monthly meetings of the group...and...suggestions were put

forward through the group rehousing officer to the Ministry concerned. In my opinion, this contact between the central government and the local authority was a complete success...but I do emphasise that this was an instance of removal from the local authority of responsibility for even the administration of the central governments policy..." (Thrupp. 1947)

The group rehousing officers provided detailed reports to the Ministry of the state of rehousing provision in their areas (for example, Ministry of Health, 1941b). Miss Thrupp's account describes London region practice; contact may not have been as close elsewhere.

It seems that in a number of local authorities this new rehousing function was kept rigidly separate from the management of the normal council stock (Interviewees). In others, however, it was combined (Interviewees). In reception areas "the billeting of the homeless and of evacuees constitutes a single problem and is dealt with by the same organisation" (Ministry of Health, 1942a). The rehousing officers in the London area began to meet together to discuss practice and then later to form their own association. The Metropolitan Boroughs' Standing Joint Committee grew alarmed that the presence of Ministry officials at these meetings might be by-passing the normal methods of consultation and suggested that the meetings in that form be discontinued as the practice was "probably dangerous" (Parker Morris, 1941).

#### 6.5.5 1941 onwards

By the time the post-raid services had been reorganised, the bombing was beginning to lessen but the preparations remained in readiness (Ministry of Health, 1942a).

The problems of the fluctuations affecting evacuation and

of accommodating war workers meant that the government had to close some towns to further immigration in order to conserve essential control over "assisted private" evacuation. Billeting officers' jobs became even more difficult as time went on and attitudes hardened and they were hard to fill (Titmuss. 1950: 392).

A new problem arose in 1944 when the flying bombs and later the rockets started. It became necessary to evacuate from London and from the area between London and the Coast. Areas which had previously been categorised as "neutral" or "reception" became evacuation areas and vice versa (Titmuss. 1950: 427). There was a new wave of fairly rapid evacuation but people soon began returning to the area of rocket bombing rather to the dismay of the government (Titmuss. 1950: 429). The rockets added to the problems of repairing houses which were already critical. "We had the rockets in '45 and that was infinitely worse because they did such a lot of damage - one rocket would lay out a whole street really of those little houses." (Interviewee. London housing manager)

#### 6.5.6 Requisitioning

The Defence (General) Regulations 1939 gave the Minister power to requisition properties and this power was delegated to local authorities so that they could take possession of:

"(a) Unoccupied and unfurnished dwelling houses or other residential buildings. The Minister is prepared, if the circumstances warrant it, to delegate to a Local Authority the power to requisition an occupied house, or a part of a house whether occupied or not.

(b) Other buildings whether occupied or not (Circulars 1857, 1949 and 2097).

(c) Unoccupied furnished premises.

(d) Furniture in unoccupied premises or shared premises.  
(Circular 2235 & 2236)."

(Ministry of Health, 1942a: 19)

Initially the management of requisitioned houses posed some problems for the local authorities especially with regard to repair (for example, Southwark, M.B., 1942). But practice, and circulars and booklets like the one quoted above, gradually helped local authorities to cope with the problems.

In 1943, Ministry of Health circular 2845 gave power to local authorities to requisition property for the inadequately housed as distinct from the bombed homeless, following representations from the local authority associations (Ministry of Health, 1943c: Local Authority Associations and the London County Council, 1943). Donnison estimates that during the war 71,000 houses had been requisitioned (Donnison, 1967: 163). This can be compared with the estimated 220,000 completely destroyed during the war or the 160,000 prefabs produced under the temporary housing programme at the end of the war and in the post-war period (Ministry of Health, 1949). Compared with the amount of administrative work they entailed, the requisitioned houses may have made only a modest contribution. This may account for the fact that this fundamental interference with the rights of property seems to get very little attention from modern housing historians (for example, Burnett (1978) does not mention it and Merrett (1979: 238) gives only a brief mention).

On the other hand, where areas were critically short of housing during the periods of heavy bombing, the requisitioned houses made a very vital contribution to relieving housing stress (interviewees, London housing managers).

#### 6.5.7 Construction and repair

"War also made heavy demands from the beginning upon the building industry. The Government's building programme for the first twelve months was more than double the 1938 programme and could only be met by cutting civilian building to the bone and organising the industry effectively. No government department then existed to do this and to co-ordinate all the different programmes: the proposal to establish one was, at that time, strongly resisted, then defeated. No single authority therefore was directly responsible for reducing civilian building. In the first week of the war, the Ministry of Health instructed local authorities to stop their house-building and slum clearance schemes. Private building, however, was restricted only through the raw material controls...Not until October 1940 was there a proper system of building licences and a department to operate it." (Hancock, 1949: 174,175)

As we have seen in discussing the Housing (War Requirements) Committee, effective co-ordination of housing construction was never achieved. It was the same with regard to repair - the issue seems to have surfaced as a series of emergencies. Perhaps this was inevitable given the competition for resources. But as late as 1943 the local authorities could allege that "It is a matter of common knowledge that some labour and materials are still being used for non-essential purposes" (Local Authority Associations and the London County Council, 1943: 2).

At an early stage the duty of supervising and carrying out repairs to housing accommodation rendered unfit for



human habitation by air bombardment or other war action had been given to the housing authorities. They also had the duty to compile a return to the District Valuer on the number of buildings which were .pa

- (a) totally destroyed.
- (b) so badly damaged that demolition is necessary.
- (c) seriously damaged but capable of repair.
- (d) slightly damaged (Ministry of Health, 1939).

Titmuss (1950: 277) comments on the unreliability of the war damage statistics which are based on these returns.

Local authorities were in 1940 very short of building labour (Titmuss, 1950: 280). The schemes were administratively cumbersome and the government did not, for example, provide guidance on the important issue of salvaging, removing and storing furniture until August 1940 (Titmuss, 1950: 256). The first crisis occurred after the blitz. It was clear that the repair of damaged houses had to be given increased priority. The government created a special organisation to assist local authorities. Mobile squads were created, including men specially released from the army, and these could be switched to any heavily attacked area. (During April 1941, the Directorate of Emergency Works put sixteen thousand repairers into London in little more than a week.)

"By August 1941 over 1,100,000 houses had been made wind and weather proof and so just habitable ... With boarded windows and tarpaulins on the roof, home might not be sweet, but at least it was home."  
(Calder, 1969: 192)

However these temporary repairs did not cope with the more fundamental problems.

"By the end of 1942 some one hundred thousand families were living in houses which had been officially condemned as unfit before the war and a further two hundred thousand in houses which would have been so condemned if the war had not broken out. Also two and a half million families occupied houses which had received only first aid repairs. Early in 1943 the War Cabinet agreed that repairs should begin on some of the hundred thousand houses made totally uninhabitable by bombs and that three thousand cottages should be built in agricultural areas." (Calder. 1969: 316)

In June 1943. Ernest Brown. then Minister of Health. convened a conference with the local authority associations to consider wartime housing problems; from this grew a Committee on wartime housing problems which was substantially concerned with repair as well as construction (Committee on wartime housing problems. 1943). The local authorities pointed out that the arrangements made by the Ministry were not adequate for dealing with the repair of either war damaged or requisitioned houses.

"The type of labour at present available involves the employment of men over 60 years of age and boys. As a result. progress is slow and actual labour costs are proving to be far in excess of estimated costs." (Parker Morris. 1943)

The committee produced a report urging greater attention to housing construction and repair. the release of more labour and measures to allow the conversion of larger dwellings into flats as a means of quickly producing a modest increase in housing supply (Local Authority Associations and the London County Council. 1943). The Minister of Health argued that it was time for action because

"Whilst air-raids continued people were grateful if their houses were made wind and watertight and were content to crowd into safer districts. But we have had a prolonged lull and there are increasing signs of restiveness which show that if the morale of

people is to be maintained - and without it the war output, both from the factories and the farms, must inevitably suffer - our housing conditions must be improved." (Ministry of Health, 1943a: Appendix 1)

The Lord President's Committee responded to this by agreeing in July 1943 that, after the demands for building for war purposes had been set, housing should have first call on immobile building labour (Ministry of Health, 1943b). Detailed arrangements were given for this in circular 1871 (Ministry of Health, 1943d). Requisitioning powers were also extended as noted in Section 6.5.6. A few months later the Government authorised some conversion of large houses into flats and the completion of partly finished houses (Hancock, 1949: 497). The local authorities, however, experienced some difficulties in administering this scheme and adjustments had to be made (Committee on war time housing problems, 1943b). By the end of the war, approximately 153,000 new houses had been completed since 1939 - mostly ones that had been under construction in 1939 (Merrett, 1979: 237). In the spring of 1944, the government was anticipating that all repairable bomb-damaged houses would be repaired by the end of the year but the flying bombs extinguished such hopes (Calder, 1969: 497). In 1944 the government decided to proceed with the immediate production of temporary housing, making extensive use of prefabrication (Merrett, 1979: 237).

After the flying bomb and rocket attacks, the government was concerned about the extent of house damage in London (Titmuss, 1950: 430) but, as soon as the end of the war was in sight, people began to return home. Although the government devised a carefully organised return scheme

culminating in the return to London from May 1945 in fact once again more people moved under their own initiative than in the government schemes (Titmuss, 1950: 434). This did not make the task of staff dealing with rehousing in London any easier since staff had not finished dealing with the results of bombing before people started returning (Interviewee, London housing manager). By the time war ended, housing problems had multiplied to a daunting extent (Titmuss, 1950: 430).

## 6.6 THE WORK OF WOMEN MANAGERS DURING THE WAR - LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### 6.6.1 Working conditions

The lack of preparation and the critical conditions of the blitz period, described earlier in this Chapter, meant that housing staff had to work long hours often in very poor conditions.

"Well of course we worked a month, every day, twelve days a week. We never had an hour off. You see we had to rehouse people because when the bombing started we had not been declared an evacuation area, so all the children had to be evacuated quickly."

In this case the woman manager acted as rehousing and billeting officer as well, and was working in a "suburban" area.)

Naturally there was a lack of suitable staff.

"We had a very mixed staff. It was fascinating really. We had a few of the local government people...there was a chap who had a gammy leg in the library so he wasn't in the services. We had women who'd never worked for pay at all or who'd done sort of COS, done curious jobs - married women who hadn't perhaps worked before they married, who were called billeting officers, but in fact they had to go out and look at property..." (Interviewee, London housing manager)

But offers of help from other Society members were very welcome.

"Of course we worked 7 days a week...we used to take Sunday off and we were called back if there was a raid...well now, other members of the Society wrote or rang us and said they'd like to come and help us at weekends, and they came, two or three people came, and this was wonderful...and this impressed the Council so much, they couldn't get over it."

"Staff rushed to London to help in the Blitz - had three to four qualified staff, the rest were people like acquisitions and billeting clerk. The young wanted to be "in it" and come to London and do a dangerous job."

The working conditions could impose an extra strain, even in the new administrative centres set up after 1940.

"But...when the '44 raids came about, then we really got going...when I went there I thought it was a little strange to have a glass roof...well we stayed on there until Lambeth had a bomb on its rehousing office and then...we were evacuated to the Elephant and Castle...where we had a shelter below ground, and this was slept in all night, by 500, and we had it all day - for another 500 more or less. So we used to get there about 8 in the morning...we used to go straight through to about 5 o'clock and at 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock we packed everything away and...went back to our old offices and worked there all evening."

"...it was full of bunks of course, and people used to come in and sit on the bunks until...we could make a queue..."

"And then we had a bomb on the power station and that put all the electricity...all the lights off...and we were working in an underground shelter, you can imagine what the temperature was like, and the air. And because, of course, we had to send out and buy up all the candles...the Council hadn't got enough and...they brought us all the street lanterns in...well you can imagine how that heated us up...500 people all night, and all day you see they were waiting to see us...We flooded, because of the sewers, and the pumps had all gone. So there we were with sewage floating about as well as all the other discomforts in the dark, knocked my head on the roof of the stairs going out...and cut my head open, which didn't help...I had to go to [hospital] and be cleaned up..."

"We started by having our office combined with the public assistance office because they had to get ration books and money and all those things...if the house really was demolished then of course they had to have help with clothing and identity cards and ration books and all that, so they had a long journey to do through all the officials ending, probably, with us - Where were they going to live? Where were they going tonight?..."

"Of course it was very tense and people were very frightened and they'd been through terrible things."

#### 6.6.2 The job of rehousing

Managers were working under considerable strain, with the threat that accommodation in the rest centres would block up completely or that the supply of rehousing would dry up. In addition they had to deal sensitively with rehousing people who were often suffering from shock, but still had their own preferences as to where to live.

"There'd been bad bombing in September [1940]...and then there was a very bad patch in the spring. And I remember the awful fear was that the rest centres would be full and there'd be nowhere for them to go..."

"And the thing we were always threatened with was that billeting would become compulsory. They couldn't get people out of the rest centres...they would make billeting compulsory and we would have to compulsory billet people. This was a sort of nightmare..."

"Some of them came in having literally been bombed out that morning. I mean, some...the first thing they wanted to do was to get in somewhere...Others...couldn't think about it for days. This is what we learnt at the rest centres that for some people you just had to go in and talk to them and not try to offer them anything, just let them...just make them feel that you are on their side. Because...if they thought that you were pushing them out, it was just like they thought you were pushing them out of their slums."

Four of the interviewees had similar experiences with rehousing.

"We never went dry [i.e. ran out of housing], we'd come right down to the last two and not know what on earth we were going to do the next day...but it was a real widow's cruse...we never went dry. We had to do our duty there, one night a week we had to be on duty all night...we used to go out on to the site and that was a tremendous help to us, because the Sanitary Inspector's plans of course had to be detailed, and they couldn't get those done and duplicated and out to us until perhaps midday. So we would go and take note...of the houses. We might say, well we can rehouse beyond number 22 or...We never housed on the spot...they must go to the rest centre, that's what it's there for."

"We used to tear out on bicycles before the office started you see. to the areas which had been damaged in the night and make a quick list ourselves. so that we knew. when people said it's down. it's completely down, you'd know that all that had happened was that the windows were out."

"Day began with finding out how many people were in the rest centres - then requisitioning and making big houses into separate places if one could...flung in kitchens where we could...Requisitioned a rather posh block of flats and two families would share one 6 bedroom flat - put two cookers in. People were marvellous."

"[Rehousing] was in some ways rather like slum clearance. this was what was so fascinating...I mean. I know when I went I thought it would be a sort of not exactly a military operation. but you know. somebody would be bombed out and they'd be housed...but instead of that. what people were worried about was...what they were doing with their dog and where they were going to keep the pram. and then in addition then some people had a panic about railways. some people had a panic about something else. I mean. if they'd been bombed out near a railway. But the other thing that was interesting was that. in spite of it being a war and all this. they were not going to live in a street which they thought was beneath them. I mean they'd literally go on living in an Anderson shelter in a bombed out house rather than take anything they didn't like."

### 6.6.3 Suburban and rural areas

Not all managers were working in the centre of the cities but even in areas identified as neutral life could quickly develop hazards.

"Romford is a neutral area for purposes of evacuation. although the German Luftwaffe has other ideas as to its desirability as a target but. despite the numerous bombings and the frequent craters to be met with in the vicinity. the estates have escaped material damage. and the tenants. generally speaking. are in good heart..."

"The proximity of the estates to the areas most affected by air raids has led to numerous applications for accommodation by people who have been bombed out of their homes. Their needs are of course always immediate. If I am unable to offer them accommodation on the spot they rarely return to me. and the number of refugees rehoused on the estates is comparatively low..." (Carey Penny. 1941)

In one rural authority, the Town Clerk

"wanted to have a housing department, they'd never had one before. This was still in the war you see, and you had to be billeting officer as well because ...in a curious way was both a reception area and had two or three aerodromes so...there was a lot of pressure on the accommodation in the area.

"And I remember I was the only woman interviewed and I never knew how they'd took to me. There were four men who were collecting under me, and I don't think they really minded too badly...

"And in the various villages it was Mr. Jones the school who was usually the billeting officer. And I remember going to see one, who was conducting about four different classes in a large hall, and cooking his own sausages on a donkey stove in the middle of the thing at the same time and interviewing me...

"So the main thing was getting the waiting list in order...so that people had a chance even if they weren't known to the local councillors...I don't think I would have been there except for this Clerk...who was very active and wanted to clear up all kinds of scandals..." (Interviewee).

Miss Hort, working in another rural authority (Wokingham) similarly struggled with some long-standing and some new problems.

"My biggest problem is repairs, and it may well prove a despairing one while war conditions last. The Addison houses have their usual afflictions of dry-rotted floors and penetrating dampness. Inside decorations have been done in a most haphazard way and, as soon as I appear, the tenants fall on me and ask to have rooms done up which have not been touched in some cases for ten years. The Surveyor, who was also the Housing Manager, was called up at the beginning of the war and, since then, first the Engineer and then the Sanitary Inspector have carried out the repairs, but without any real system ... Very few of the houses are on main drainage, and I am learning the full horrors of cess-pools. Most of the houses have earth-closets, but in Twyford there are W.C.s and the cess-pools are in the front gardens, so that when they overflow, as not infrequently happens, they run down into the street...

"The Housing Committee has been suspended during the war, but the Chairman, who is a woman, is an able and energetic person...When a vacancy occurs in a Council house, the practice is for the new tenant to be chosen by the Chairman and the Councillor representing the parish concerned, who is supposed to have an intimate knowledge of all the local applicants. I do not yet know what degree of



impartiality exists among the Councillors, but I foresee that this practice may be open to objections..." (Hort. 1941)

## 6.7 THE WORK OF WOMEN MANAGERS DURING THE WAR - CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

### 6.7.1 Ministry of Supply

As we have seen in Section 4.3. the need to accommodate workers for factories concerned with urgent war production began to clash with other accommodation needs. Manufacture had been spread out as far as possible to rural areas and wild valleys. In some areas, estates had to be built and managed by the Ministry concerned because of lack of other accommodation (Hill. 1981).

Chapter 3 showed how the estates built by the Ministry of Munitions during the First World War had produced problems and women managers had been called in. Obviously this experience was remembered in some places. The Society minutes for June 1940 recorded a resolution that had been passed at the National Council of Women.

"Housing of Munition Workers. The National Council of Women, wishing to avoid such waste of material and public funds as was caused by the type of temporary Housing Estates erected during the last war, urges the Government to provide an adequate and efficiently administered system of Housing Estates for workers in the new munition and other factories..." (SWHM Minutes. 8.6.40)

The same minutes mention that SWHM had a sub-group conducting research on the housing of munition workers.

The July 1941 minutes record that Miss Larke (who had worked during the First World War) had written to suggest approaching the Ministry of Supply with regard to the management of houses being built near the new factories. But it was agreed that no action be taken in view of the

scarcity of qualified workers (SWHM Minutes, 13.7.41). However the wheels were turning and "somebody remembered" (Hill, 1981). The Ministry of Supply advertised for a housing manager and Margaret Hurst\* applied for and got the job. She was appointed as a housing manager but in a few weeks became "Administrator for Married Quarters" (Hill, 1981).

By November 1942 the establishment for the Ministry of Supply was up to two regional managers, three managers of estates and three or four assistants (SWHM Minutes, 16.11.41). By January 1943 there were twelve housing managers at the Ministry of Supply (SWHM Bulletin, January 1943). This meant there was a network of housing managers all over the country. "All Octavia Hill trained...this was Ministry policy." (Hill, 1981) There were regular meetings in London to keep these managers in touch and provide them with support as they were often working in very isolated roles (Interviewees).

The jobs meant a lot of travelling which was difficult and exhausting during the war.

"The work didn't include collecting rents but everything else. See flats let, keeping rent records straight. The rents were deducted from wages by wages branch but this led to more difficulties than it cured as the deductions were not always right...confusion over advances and arrears and weeks on holiday etc." (Interviewee)

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\* Margaret (Peggy) Hurst had been the first housing manager in Capetown in 1934 (see Chapter Five); subsequently as Mrs Margaret Hill became first housing advisor at the Ministry of Health. References in this Chapter and later are given in the name of Hill.

The factory estates had been established because otherwise it would be impossible to get labour. The tenants had bargaining power as workers too and this led to a rather different emphasis in housing management.

"Our aim was to keep the people as happy as you could. but it was a problem...At one stage Billy Butlin was brought in by Lord Beaverbrook to 'keep the people happy in the hostels'." (Hill, 1981)

The job of keeping people happy was not easy since the pressure to economise on traditional building materials had once again produced buildings with problems.

"The buildings had great problems of damp...all concrete...had not dried out when the tenants moved in...at one stage I went and lost my voice and went up to London and had a row with the head of the division screaming at him without a voice that I would not let any more under these conditions. After this there was a site visit with a large group of architects, surveyors, etc. and they installed blow driers and got the buildings dried out...this helped to satisfy the shop stewards who were drawn in when the workers were dissatisfied..." (Interviewee, ex MOS housing manager)

A number of the managers who had worked for Ministry of Supply commented how much the ethos of "keep the workers happy" dominated and on the fact that the estates had a much broader social mix than was usual on Council estates at that time. One wartime manager commented how different the attitude of other staff was.

"This was one of the good things about the Ministry of Supply. You went to a factory and they said 'Ooh, you know about housing, thank goodness, here's the files, here you are, anything you want just ask us, goodbye.' You knew you were really wanted; it wasn't a case of your wanting to do the job, it was a case of their wanting you to do the job. And the whole attitude of the Civil Service was good in that way. They had fought the battles before; you were accepted on your merits. I think it was a contrast to local government, where you had to convince them all the time you could do it, until they got used to you."

Despite the difficult, isolated and sometimes exhausting work, many of the managers valued this work experience. A number of them went on to important jobs, such as posts with the first New Towns where they felt that the wartime experience was regarded as significant.

#### 6.7.2      The Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Admiralty

The Ministry of Aircraft Production usually got local authorities to manage their houses. "Generally, the MAP estates are managed by local authorities but, where this is not, or has not been, practicable, independent agents have been, or would be, appointed..." (Ministry of Aircraft Production, 1941). After a time women housing managers were appointed but it was only a small establishment. One interviewee was appointed to manage an estate which the local authority had felt it could not cope with. "The official title was Ministry of Aircraft Production Housing Manager...for about 500-600 temporary bungalows, prefabs with grey walls, bricked but unplastered inside. Locally called the piggeries..."

As with MOS work, the estates were occupied with people of mixed social class. This housing manager, however, stuck to her own principles of fair treatment.

"The factory used to send down batches of names of people coming and which wife they were bringing or whether they were going to start with a new one... For example, the Managing Director already had his wife, or somebody called Mrs. X, in one bungalow; then he brought another one down and installed her in another bungalow. I told him he couldn't do it; after all a person's life is their own but he couldn't have two bungalows." (Wartime MAP manager)

Society records show that contracts with government departments were still further extended by the appointment of two members as Officers for Housing Duties to the Admiralty (SWHM. 1944: 4).

### 6.7.3 Ministry of Health

An appointment which seemed important at the time, both for the Society and for housing management, was that of an adviser on housing management to the Ministry of Health. Unfortunately, no information about this had been found in Public Record Office files and apparently most internal records have been destroyed. A little information is available from subsequent holder of the post (Fox. 1974) and from the interview with the first post holder, Margaret Hill.

It seems reasonable to suppose that it was H. V. Willink's experience as Commissioner for the London region (see Section 5.2) which had made him aware of the deficiencies in local housing management and the work done by the Society. Certainly the appointment seems to be linked with Willink's accession to the post of Minister of Health.

"At the end of 1943, Willink was at the Ministry of Health and was very keen on the welfare side and wanted to stress housing management at the Ministry and so they advertised for an adviser...and again I was lucky to get it...and so for a short time I was adviser on housing management which was a jolly difficult job because my job was to go round to all the local authorities..." (Hill. 1981)

It is reasonable to suppose that Margaret Hill's experience at the Ministry of Supply in charge of a team also seemed good background for this job.

After Margaret Hill left the Ministry in 1945 (SWHM, 1945) she was succeeded by M. Empson, who was also a member of the Society and who remained in post for 22 years (Fox, 1974). The establishment did not expand in the way originally intended.

"We were meant to have regional offices and have the whole thing going...very much for housing management but local authorities were pretty individualistic, as you know, and I think it's all developed in different ways." (Hill, 1981)

So far as the wartime period is concerned, however, the appointment of a member of the Society as the sole Adviser on housing management would seem to be a signal recognition of the work and standards of Society members and one which would be expected to lead to even greater standing for its work.

## 6.8 SOCIETY AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

### 6.8.1 THE LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Initially, the upheaval caused by the war had brought about an increase in female unemployment and it had not been necessary to draw to a great extent on women's labour (ILO, 1946: 11).

By 1941 the plans for enhancing war production began to result in large demands for labour and measures were taken to bring about an increase in the number of women workers by the use of the Minister of Labour and National Service's compulsory powers under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1940 and by the National Service (No. 2) Act 1941. The Minister had the power to require persons to register themselves at a local office of the Ministry

or otherwise. The first registrations of women took place in April and May 1941, first of all of younger women and then later in the war, when manpower needs became even more acute, of older women. Those engaged in non-essential industry and domestic employment could be redeployed but women with household duties were exempted though encouraged to take up part-time work where suitable. Regulation of employment was exercised also through the provision that women obtained their jobs through local offices of the Ministry or approved organisations and that employers had to notify these offices when employees left. As time went on the "comb out" of women from non-essential jobs became more severe and after December 1941 women were liable to be called up for service in the auxiliary forces and civil defence. Married women and women with children under 14 were exempt. Again these regulations were brought in for younger women and gradually extended to older women (ILO, 1946: 16-22).

#### 6.8.2 Obtaining reserved occupation status

With legislation increasingly affecting the employment of women, it was necessary for the Society to take steps to secure the status of its members. In May 1942 the Bulletin reported that "The Ministry of Labour and National Service has been approached on the subject of housing management being included in the list of vital industries and services for women." (SWHM Bulletin, May 1942: 1) Also the Society had been approved as an agency under the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order 1942 (SWHM Bulletin, May 1942: 1).

In September 1942 the Bulletin reported that the approach to the Ministry of Labour had been successful.

"Permission has now been received from the Ministry of Labour and National Service to place members and students, provided that those in conscription age groups do not opt for the Services or for Civil Defence. It is hoped to reach some agreement for the deferment of those who have so opted. Under the new regulations for approved agencies, the Ministry are being informed of the numbers of students placed and given particulars of the placing of trained women and students in the conscription age groups." (SWHM Bulletin, September 1942: 1)

And in January 1943:

"The position of members in relation to conscription has now been clarified by a statement in a Ministry of Health circular that women housing managers in the employment of local authorities should be reserved from the age of 18 years and that women billeting and rehousing officers should also be reserved." (SWHM Bulletin, January 1943: 2)

Part of the drive to save on manpower was the provision that students were only exempt if they were pursuing their studies satisfactorily and there was a pressure to shorten courses (ILO, 1946: 20.21). The housing management course was shortened to a year (SWHM Bulletin, January 1943: 2).

### 6.8.3 Employment negotiations

As in the 1930s, the Society sought opportunities to publicise the work of women managers, to follow up enquiries by personal contact if possible and was even prepared to negotiate conditions of work and salaries.

Initially the war had not created any extra demand for housing managers (SWHM Minutes, 30.9.39).

"The likelihood of new openings for women caused by the calling up of male members of staffs for war service was suggested, but so far most local



authorities were more inclined to cut down on staff for the sake of economy than to make new appointments. Miss Upcott reminded members of the danger of taking on men's jobs in circumstances which would not allow the full application of our principles of management." (SWHM Quarterly Bulletin, January 1940: 4)

Miss Upcott of course had her own reasons for reservations about war employment as she had been one of the managers dismissed from the Ministry of Munitions after the First World War.

"Miss Larke, on the other hand, considered it advisable for us to take on work of a temporary nature wherever possible, as it would be bound to give some impression of our capabilities." (SWHM Quarterly Bulletin, January 1940: 4)

During the First World War, Miss Larke had followed this course. The likelihood of new openings soon became a reality as the war continued and the billeting and rehousing work described earlier expanded.

"Many enquiries have been received during the past six months from local authorities and other landlords wishing to employ women to replace members of their housing staffs who have been called up for military service. In some cases these have led to satisfactory appointments, but in others the conditions have not been sufficiently favourable for Octavia Hill work for the Council to feel justified in advising members of the Society to apply for the posts. Since the Blitzkrieg began there have also been enquiries about the employment of members as rehousing or billeting officers in bombed areas; some members are combining these duties with their usual work." (SWHM Quarterly Bulletin, January 1941: 1)

"Loughborough. The Loughborough Housing Committee, following on the dismissal of the Housing Clerk of Works for embezzlement, were considering the duties connected with housing between the Borough Treasurer's and the Borough Surveyor's Departments. The attention of the Borough Treasurer had been called to the following considerations: that it was possible to combine the employment of women housing managers with close control by the Borough Treasurer; that rent collection was of value in that it provided a regular contact with all the tenants; that Octavia Hill workers were trained to undertake all duties involved in housing management." (SWHM Minutes, 14.7.40)

Opposition to the appointment of women or the Octavia Hill system was still found and could be quite open. Incidents from Lincoln and Wellington demonstrate this.

"Lincoln. An advertisement had appeared for a senior housing assistant. applications being invited 'from males only'...the staff at Lincoln had written asking for advice and SWHM Council agreed "that a letter be sent to the Town Clerk expressing regret at the situation and pointing out that the Lincoln decision placed the Octavia Hill assistants and the students in a difficult position"." (SWHM Minutes. 17.6.39)

This action did not have any effect however. It seems that a man was appointed and the students encouraged to join the Institute of Housing. The Society wrote to the students but some at least decided to join the Institute.

"The Chairman of Housing Committee had been reported in the Press as stating that the rules of the Institute of Housing were adequate to deal with the needs of women assistants. It was agreed to call the Town Clerk's attention to the paragraphs in the Balfour Report. which summarised the differences in policy between the Society and the Institute of Housing." (SWHM Minutes. 12.8.39).

This action did not have any more result than the previous one. In other authorities. opposition to women was linked with opposition to the Octavia Hill system.

"Wellington (Shropshire). Rural District Council had appointed a male housing manager. This appointment had been due mainly to the opposition of the Chairman of the Housing Committee and the Clerk of the Council to the Octavia Hill system. Miss Neilson. Welfare Officer to the Central Ordnance Depot. was trying to influence officials of the Tenants' League on behalf of Octavia Hill work." (SWHM Minutes. 24.1.43)

After the extensive bombing of 1940. the need for trained housing managers to deal with rehousing did become more apparent and a number of new appointments were made (see Section 5.2 of this Chapter). In some authorities the staff dealing with billeting and rehousing of the

homeless seem to have remained entirely separate from those dealing with the management of the usual council stock: in others the work was merged from the beginning while others probably changed from separate to merged arrangements during or at the end of the war. The Society was naturally concerned about the conditions of the new posts but was often closely consulted about filling them.

"Southwark. The Chairman reported on the interview she and Miss Tabor had had with the Borough Treasurer, the Regional Manager of Requisitioned Properties and a representative of the London Civil Defence Region. At this interview the Borough Treasurer had agreed to recommend to his Council the appointment of a manager at 250 per annum. Subsequently he asked the Society to submit one candidate for the manager's post. In view of the fact that only a short time was given for applications and the post was a wartime one, an application from Miss Kipping had been submitted..." (SWHM Minutes, 24.1.43).

"Miss Hort also raised the question of the assistance for which one should ask in the management of 400 tenancies and, in view of the fact that there was billeting work to be undertaken, was advised to ask for a full time assistant to combine housing and billeting duties under the Minister of Health's scheme for billeting officers."

"The legal position appears to be that billeting officers act as agents of the Minister, but in practice they are regarded as the officers of the local authority, and evacuation has been treated in much the same way as any other grant aided local government service." (Ministry of Health, 1942a)

The problem of whether to accept mixed or temporary posts was quite an important one.

"Lambeth. The chairman reported on conversations and correspondence with the Borough Treasurer and the Chairman of the Housing Committee with reference to the posts of Temporary Assistants in the Housing Section of the Borough Treasurer's Department. In view of the attitude of the Borough Treasurer, the Chairman had recommended that members be given permission to apply for these posts at a salary of 180 per annum, on the understanding that the conditions of their employment would be temporary, for the sake both of the men they would replace and

of their own status." (SWHM Minutes. 8.6.40)

This particular arrangement did not work out very well, however.

"Lambeth. Miss Carr and Miss Stewart had resigned their posts on account of not having been allowed any discretion in the exercise of their duties." (SWHM Minutes. 19.1.41)

The Society continued to refuse to recommend or advertise appointments where it felt that conditions were unsatisfactory from the beginning. For example,

"Huddersfield. An enquiry had been received through Miss F. L. Sawers for a woman manager mainly to undertake "social uplift" among tenants. Agreed that such compromises could not be accepted, especially in view of the present demand for trained workers." (SWHM Minutes. 16.3.41)

The Society was even prepared on occasion to help members who ran into difficulties because of personal beliefs.

"Swansea. Miss D. C. Walton, Assistant, and Miss B. Williams, Trainee, had been suspended from their appointments with the County Borough of Swansea for the duration on account of being members of the Peace Pledge Union." (SWHM Minutes. 13.7.40)

As a member. Miss Jones was asked to investigate this case.

"The motion suspending conscientious objectors had been rescinded by the Swansea Borough Council. Miss Williams had been reinstated as trainee, but had been advised by Miss Jones to complete her nine months training at Lancaster." (SWHM Minutes. 16.11.40)

Lancaster was a well known training office so it appears that the students had been given a new placement after the difficulties at Swansea.

Support from the Society was not unconditional, however.

"Lincoln. Miss Parkinson had been dismissed from her post as Woman Rent Collector to the Lincoln City Council on account of activities connected with the

Peace Pledge Union...Agreed that she be reminded that employees of a local authority were expected to represent the views of that authority and that it was not in accordance with professional standards for a housing manager to make known to tenants her views on political matters." (SWHM Minutes. 14.9.40)

#### 6.8.4 Central government appointments

We have already seen (Section 5.2) that the Society had contact with H. U. Willink over the appointments to some of the new posts in London boroughs after the blitz. It also seems to have been closely involved with certain central government appointments. For example,

"Miss Upcott reported on an interview with officials of the Ministry. Agreed that, if an appointment was advertised and the Society were asked to short-list candidates. Miss Upcott, the Chairman and Miss Hurst act as the Selection Committee." (SWHM Minutes, 15.3.42)

There was also close involvement with the Housing Management Adviser's post.

"Ministry of Health. The chairman reported on an interview she and Miss Tabor had had with Miss Aves, Senior Welfare Officer, on 29.7.43, and also on an interview she, Miss Hurst and Mrs Cocburn had had with Miss Russell Smith with reference to a proposed appointment, since sanctioned, of a member of the Society to act as a liaison officer to local authorities in connection with questions of housing management. Miss Alford, Miss Hurst and Miss Thompson were being considered for this appointment." (SWHM Minutes. 19.9.43)

### 6.9 THE SOCIETY - WARTIME ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES

#### 6.9 THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SOCIETY

At the beginning of the war there were practical problems about where to locate the Society's office. By September 1939 a decision had been made by the Housing Centre to close, in view of the outbreak of war and work had to be carried on temporarily from the Secretary's address in

London (SWHM Circular letter. 4.9.39). An emergency meeting of Council was informed that Dr. Miller (the Secretary) had received an offer of a post at Oxford but would be willing to act as a voluntary adviser to the office staff if it moved to Oxford (SWHM Minutes. 9.9.39). The office therefore moved to Oxford (SWHM Minutes. 30.9.39). By March 1940, the inconvenience of operating from Oxford led the Society to decide to rent two rooms from the Housing Centre and open the office about once a week (SWHM Minutes. 9.3.40). But in November it was agreed that this office would not be open during the winter months (SWHM Minutes. 16.11.40). In July 1941 it was agreed that the London office should be re-opened and a part-time secretary, Mrs. Cockburn, be employed there with special responsibility for students while the acting secretary remained mainly in Oxford (SWHM Minutes. 13.7.41). When Dr Miller was due to leave Oxford, the office was finally moved back to London in August 1942 (SWHM Minutes. 12.7.42).

Wartime arrangements also involved the setting up of an Emergency Executive (SWHM Minutes. 9.9.39) though it was resolved that the Council should meet every three months and that the work of the Society should be maintained as far as possible.

Despite wartime conditions, efforts were made to continue the support which the Society had given to its members. AGMs were held each year and, apart from 1940, included visits to property and talks, as well as the business meeting.

An annual conference was held each year, but in 1942, 1943 and 1945 was held in London because of the difficulties of wartime travelling and accommodation. However, the Society managed to use a provincial location in some years: Birmingham in 1940, Lancaster in 1941 and Hereford in 1944 (SWHM Annual Reports, 1940-1945). A London regional group of managers formed and this also met together and discussed wartime problems and, on some occasions, those managers concerned with rehousing also met specially (SWHM, 1941: 5).

The Junior Organisation also became an important social focus for younger members (see Section 9.3). A number of meetings were also held in connection with reconstruction (see Section 9.5). Society members also continued to address meetings of other organisations as part of the general propaganda but details of these meetings were no longer given in the reports (SWHM, 1943a): 7).

The Bulletin was reduced to a wartime paper saving format, losing its card cover and reducing print size in May 1942. Sometimes there were longer intervals between publications, for example between January and June 1944. (This was doubtless the reason for the change of name from "Quarterly Bulletin" to "Bulletin" over this period.) But on the whole the content and style of the Bulletin was maintained.

### Membership

As Table 6.1 shows, the war period was one of growth for the Society. Almost one hundred more ordinary members

were added over this period and the number of students had doubled by 1945. (Membership figures need to be treated with caution however since we do not know the rigour of "strike-off" procedures.)

TABLE 6.1

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY  
DURING THE PERIOD 1938 - 1945

	31st August 1938	31st August 1945
Fellows	26	35
Ordinary Members	159	256
Total	185	291
Honorary Members	30	27
Associates	63	79
Students	60	122

Source: SWHM Annual Reports, 1938-39 to 1944-45.

#### 6.9.2 TRAINING

The Society continued to operate its training scheme through the war. though some adjustments had to be made. In May 1941. it was noted that the Ministry of Labour and National Service had decided to allow students in training for housing management to complete their training (SWHM Minutes. 11.5.41). It was also noted that there had been a meeting of managers about the scarcity of qualified assistants (SWHM Minutes 11.5.41). At the same meeting there is a note under the heading "Criticism of Training Offices" which implies that such criticism had been made. though it does not specify what they were. It was decided not to pass definite criticisms on to the managers. that specially chosen managers should be asked to fill up questionnaires on how they trained students



which would then be considered by the training committee and used as the basis for a "symposium on training" which would be circulated to training managers (SWHM Minutes, 11.5.41).

#### Finance for training

Possibly a sign of changing times was the fact that the difficulty of financing students began to be discussed. A letter to the bulletin in May 1942 raised the whole question of recruitment to housing management and suggested, especially in view of the likely demand for post-war housing reconstruction, that there should be a long term policy.

Comparisons were made between the publicly financed flow of recruits into teaching and the difficulties of the would-be housing manager.

"The need for suitable recruits to Housing Management has never been more acute than at present, and as this need is likely to increase as the war continues and also later during a period of post-war Housing reconstruction, may we suggest that there should be a long term policy to meet the difficulty.

"There is a marked contrast here with the teaching profession. There is a steady flow of trained women into elementary and secondary schools, and the chief reason for this is the direct avenue provided by government training grants from the schools through the universities and training colleges into teaching. Could not a similar system be evolved for Women Housing Managers?

"We are familiar with the difficulties which face the prospective student for Octavia Hill work. She is told that coming straight from school, she is too young and inexperienced, and that she must fill in a year or two with some other training. She must face the fact that for several years she will be unable to support herself and unless her family are fairly well off, she will probably decide to do something else. In this way the Society loses many promising students, and suffers, perhaps, in that so large a proportion of its members are drawn from the

'comfortable' middle class.

"We should like to suggest, therefore, that a joint scheme might be worked out to provide a grant-aided avenue for social and welfare workers, similar to that already in existence for teachers."  
(Members at Newcastle-under-Lyme, 1942)

The suggestion of public finance seemed the only way out of the restricted system of training. Helen Alford gave the official reply in the next issue of the journal, pointing out that many of the Society's students were receiving financial help in one form or another. She outlined the disadvantages of a state scheme as the Society saw them.

"We all agree that ideally we must aim at enabling the suitable candidate from any walk of life to become a housing manager, and we must further agree, if we are honest, that at present we do not realise this ideal, owing to lack of sufficient financial aid for the candidate totally without resources.

"The real problem we have to face in considering a scheme of state-aided education is the difficulty of maintaining the Society's present standard of selection. The steady flow of trained women into the teaching profession to which the letter referred is, in fact, unregulated by selection or any other method, and the teaching profession has, in consequence, suffered at various times from under-employment and at all times from a surplus of mediocrity. It would be necessary for the Society in all circumstances to safeguard its standards."  
(Alford, 1942)

However, she said that the possibilities outlined in the letter were being explored. What Miss Alford failed to point out was that the financial help given to the Society's students was very limited and that it was still difficult for students from less well off backgrounds to qualify, though the gradual growth of local authority trainee posts could help (Interviewees). There does not appear to be any discussion of this issue on the minutes of this period. However, minutes of the Training

committee were no longer included in the minute book by that date so there is not much detail on training matters.

At the annual Provincial Conference at Hereford in May 1944. there was a more thorough discussion of training, initiated by the Chairman of the Junior Organisation. Some of the dissatisfactions of students were aired. These included the difficulty of correspondence study after a day's work and the constraints of correspondence tuition and some criticism of the syllabus (Snook, 1944). These problems came up again at the Annual General Meeting in 1944 and in a subsequent meeting with representatives of the Junior Organisation. Pay and the possibility of financial assistance for students were discussed again. (SWHM, 1945: 3)

At a meeting with the National Federation of Housing Associations. the desirability of paid studentships for ex-service women after the war was discussed (SWHM Minutes, 15.1.44). There were recurring discussions during the war period about revision of the syllabus and meetings with the CSI to consider this.

A more radical departure was the recognition of the need to do something for older staff working in SWHM offices who were not going to be able to undergo the rigorous training which the Society normally required. This was announced in the annual report of 1944-45

"Scheme for training Uncertificated Assistants:  
...At an Extraordinary General Meeting held on July 8th at Walston House, a training scheme for uncertificated assistants was approved and a

resolution passed empowering the Council to set in motion the necessary procedure for the alteration of the Article of Association to admit a new class, to be known as Licentiates." (SWHM, 1945: 3)

### 6.9.3 The Junior Organisation

The 1939 Annual Report announced the formation of a Junior Organisation. Consisting of four regional groups and a central executive, this was formed with the idea of "enabling younger members and students of the Society to meet and discuss matters of general and professional interest" (SWHM, 1939: 6.7).

The Junior Organisation continued to flourish throughout the war years, though wartime circumstances could make it difficult. For example, in the early part of 1939-40 all four branches (London, Midlands, North-East and North-West) were active and the London group in particular had speakers, read papers and organised visits (SWHM, 1940: 5.6). But the next annual report said that meetings had become rather more curtailed after August 1940.

"The provincial groups, however, have always found meetings more difficult to arrange than have the London Group, owing to long distance travel and high fares, and, when air raids began in September, they were forced to abandon their already rather restricted activities and devote their energies to very occasional meetings."

The Midlands Group had however started a News Letter to keep offices in touch with each other and the North-West Group held several informal meetings. The London Group had to abandon its original programme but decided, until evening meetings were possible, to hold Saturday lunch-hour meetings. "That many members attended was proof of their keenness." (SWHM, 1941: 5.6) The Junior Organisation continued to meet throughout the war and was involved, for example, in the discussions on training as

described earlier in this Section.

It has already been noted that the Society provided important social support to its members. The Junior Organisation was an extension of its support to younger members, particularly since a regional organisation was attempted, which encouraged more frequent contact. Interviewees who had been involved with it during the war spoke warmly of the support which it provided.

#### 6.9.4 The admission of men

This issue, which was to become much more prominent in the post-war period, had already surfaced during the war.

At the AGM in November 1943, the motion was put forward

"That in view of the immense development of housing schemes likely to take place after the war and the public recognition of the value of trained management, the Council be asked to consider making the Society's training available to men as well as to women."

The motion was proposed by Jean Thompson, manager at Southall, and seconded by Miss Alford, both members already working in local authorities. Jean Thompson said

"A number of men would be doing housing work similar to ours after the war: was there to be no alternative training for them to that given by the Institute of Housing, whose principles were opposed to ours?...If we insisted on one-sex training we might hold up a big advance." (SWHM Bulletin, January 1944: 4).

The main arguments put forward against the resolution were:

- "(1) The limited capacity of offices for training: that places there are should be kept for women.
- (2) The danger of swamping the Society by admitting large numbers of men.
- (3) The likelihood that the men who applied for

training would be of an inferior type.

- (4) The difficulty of inevitable differences in salary.
- (5) That men would get the best posts and leave the routine work to women.
- (6) That men would not get the entry to houses as women can.
- (7) That the Society has made its way as a women's society and its members have done their work as women. It is not exclusive but a speciality.
- (8) That this is a bad time to consider such a resolution because:-
  - (a) the Society is not large enough nor public opinion enlightened enough for it to be an established practice to appoint women to managerial posts.
  - (b) the economic position of women after this war will be as bad as after the last. and we should not give up anything we have won."

(SWHM Bulletin. January 1944: 4)

In June 1944. the minutes report some discussion of training of men and the Education Committee were asked to consider (a) conditions of acceptance and training; (b) the creation of a separate professional class. The discussion which was carried on in the Bulletin was revealing of attitudes and stereotypes. It will however be more fully considered in the next Chapter. The fact that the issue had already surfaced during the war period is indicative that some members had already realised that SWHM's position would be weak when housing employment started to expand again. Jean Thompson's speech expressed this very well.

#### 6.9.5 Work on reconstruction

From a fairly early stage in the war discussions about

post-war housing began and the Society was involved in meetings and committees on this. One member felt that there were possibly too many meetings about this and "they were rather a waste of time..." (interviewee).

For example, the National Council of Women set up a sectional committee on post-war reconstruction on which the Society had several representatives (SWHM Minutes, 21.9.41). But subsequently representation from this group was withdrawn because the meetings were held at an inconvenient time for housing managers (SWHM Minutes, 12.7.42). The first of several meetings organised by the Society on planning was held at the Housing Centre in September 1941. Jean Thompson, the chairman, explained "The administration of estates is obviously intimately bound up with their lay-out, and both as citizens and in our professional capacity we should already be concerned with the wider issue of Reconstruction." The decision was made to form groups within the Society to look at different aspects of planning and Professor Holford was invited to speak on Reconstruction and a National Plan at the Housing Centre in October (Hamilton, 1941).

At this latter meeting, Mrs. Barclay expressed doubts

"Some people seemed to think we should be able to start again with a clean sheet after the war - even some reconstruction groups were shockingly romantic. Our planning needed to be founded on reality, if it was to be of any value."

She reminded members that the opportunity to build a better Britain had been missed after the First World War (SWHM Quarterly Bulletin, January 1942: 7).

Efforts were made, however, to give a more realistic

basis to the planning. The Society was asked to provide information for the Nuffield College Reconstruction Survey (Strange. 1941).

Later the planning groups became involved in a questionnaire (SWHM Minutes. 15.3.42) and the work on this was incorporated in the Society's evidence to the Dudley committee\* (see below).

The AGM of 1941 had also been addressed by G.D.H. Cole on "Fundamentals of Social Reconstruction in Great Britain". He thanked members for the help given in the Nuffield Survey and looked at the relationship of housing to industry and the possible utilisation of temporary housing to avoid a sudden rise in building costs as had happened after the First World War ('AFL'. 1942).

An article in the Bulletin followed up this idea suggesting that authorities should make plans for temporary housing and where possible SWHM members should manage it. The use of prefabrication and the conversion of existing dwellings was discussed (HMC. 1942).

The same issue of the Bulletin also carries a report of the Women's Conference on Planning and Housing in May 1942 which was organised at the RIBA by the Housing Centre with the Women's Institutes. the Women's

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\* This was, at that stage, the Central Housing Advisory Committee's sub-committee on the Design of houses and flats. a title later changed to the Design of dwellings: often referred to in the literature as the Dudley



committee after the name of the Chairman. Electrical Association, the National Council of Women, the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Society of Women Housing Managers, and others. It was addressed by Professor Patrick Abercrombie on national planning and Henry Willink chaired a Housing Brains Trust. At the end of this conference Lady E. Simon moved a resolution that "Women were not adequately represented on the various committees set up to deal with post-war housing and planning" and urging the Government to appoint a committee of women qualified to advise on these problems. She pointed out that, during the war, vacancies on local councils were filled by co-option and this was a chance to get women on. Women should talk about housing and get it discussed while opinions are still fluid (Hort, 1942: 6).

As we saw in Chapter Four, efforts had been made earlier to get better representation of women on CHAC - this effort was not much more successful than previous ones had been.

The Dudley committee noted that...the Minister was referring to the main committee the question of women's representation in regard to sub-committee's work" (CHAC, 1942). Later Miss Megan Lloyd George MP joined the sub-committee's membership though it is not clear whether this had anything to do with the representations or not. Also the SWHM minutes notes that Miss Crewe was representing SWHM on the Ad Hoc Committee which the Women's Advisory Housing Council had been asked to set up to help the sub-committee sift the evidence submitted

(SWHM Minutes. 10.5.42). The Dudley committee minutes record the attendance of this ad hoc committee in April 1943 (CHAC. 1943a).

The Society had asked to defer its evidence to the Dudley committee until the results of the questionnaire were ready (SWHM Minutes. 10.5.42). A report based on the questionnaires was published in May 1943 and the Bulletin records that evidence based on the results of the planning questionnaires was submitted to the sub-committee on the Design of Dwellings of the Ministry of Health Central Housing Advisory Committee, which also received oral evidence from members of the Society (SWHM Bulletin. June 1943). The evidence submitted, in a booklet of 52 pages, was based on a questionnaire undertaken by 35 managers and including 2,077 tenants selected on a sample basis to give representation to different income groups and family types (SWHM. 1943b). It therefore represents a substantial effort for the Society. However the minutes of the Dudley sub-committee do not record the submission of any written or oral evidence by SWHM to the full sub-committee. There is a record of oral evidence being given by SWHM to the sub-committee's panel on flat development in February 1943 with Miss Alford, Mrs. Barclay and Miss Tabor attending (CHAC. 1943a) and this is the date referred to in the Society's minutes (SWHM Minutes. 24.1.43). The CHAC sub-committee file has been heavily "weeded" so no supporting papers are available and it remains uncertain how far SWHM's painfully gathered evidence was used by the Dudley committee.

The Society's report was quite wide in scope, stressing the need for a variety of dwellings to cater for the fact that there was a variety of taste and expectation. There were a large number of specific recommendations, including the need for playgrounds both for cottage estates and flats, sound-proofing both for houses and flats but "for families, flats are to be avoided wherever possible". The report recommended that each block of flats should provide its own room for tenants meetings and its own communal workshop. It also dealt with housing for the aged, housing for the large family and the vexed question of the problem family, where it stated that "segregation of the problem family is to be avoided; so also is specially designed accommodation with cheap or inferior equipment" (SWHM, 1943b).

The Society was also represented in a number of other committees concerned with post-war housing. In 1943, for example, there were Society representatives on the CHAC Sub-committee on Rural Housing, the Ministry of Works and Planning Directorate of Post-War Building, Standards Committee, the Women's Group on Public Welfare; and there were a number of other committees to which the Society had given evidence (SWHM Bulletin, June 1943). In 1944 a member of the Society was appointed to the Scottish Housing Advisory Council and the Junior Organisation undertook an investigation of consumer requirements for the Ministry of Fuel and Power (SWHM, 1945: 4). The Society's involvement in the work on reconstruction of housing was therefore fairly extensive and time consuming. What is less certain is the effect of this

involvement.

## 6.10 CONCLUSIONS

It would be possible to look at the war period as a time of considerable achievement by the Society and advance for women housing managers. It is clear that, as far as the Society is concerned, it continued to play a vital role in supporting the employment of women managers. It managed to maintain its organisation and membership despite the problems of wartime organisation. It even managed to continue to quite a considerable extent to hold those meetings and conferences which we have shown were important in maintaining the social support of women housing managers. This social support was even further enhanced by the creation of the Junior Organisation which was active over this period as a focus for the younger members. Meetings, committee work and the Bulletin were also important in the dissemination of information to members. Despite all the difficulties of operating over the war period, by the end of the period the membership of the Society had actually increased substantially and the number of students had doubled.

The Society continued its direct work on employment - taking opportunities to publicise the work of women managers and being willing to engage in quite detailed negotiations about conditions of work or individual appointments. The training scheme was also continued despite wartime conditions and a close interest was taken in the progress of students, continuing to place them in two offices which widened their experience and their contacts.

As war went on the women managers were increasingly employed in important posts both in the local authorities and in central government. The work was strenuous and demanding and women showed that they were capable of managing it. The appointments with the Ministry of Supply were important in broadening experience especially in dealing with people of all social classes. There seems to have been greater recognition at the Ministry of Health of the role of housing management and the quality of work of members of the Society and this culminated in the appointment of a member of the Society as housing management adviser - surely a signal of recognition.

The Society also played its part in the plans for reconstruction and joining with other organisations to press for better representation of women in decisions about post-war housing.

On the other hand, it would not be appropriate to paint too rosy a picture about the gains made during this period. The Society's numbers were still small. The restrictions of the training scheme meant that new members were added only slowly and this was already causing some concern and shortage of qualified staff. It had been pointed out how the shortage of finance for training restricted members and the social class of new entrants. One cure for this which was advocated was the increase in trainee posts in local authorities, but this would effectively tend to take selection out of the hands of the Society. Moreover there were still only a few

women in senior posts and some of the new appointees had been given temporary appointments or restricted to specialist areas such as requisitioning. The influence of the Society was not quite so strong with the local authorities, which were still very male dominated, as it was at the Ministry of Health. For example, the committee on wartime housing problems which was important as a channel of communication between the Ministry of Health and the local authorities, did not contain any women, let alone any Society members (Committee on wartime housing problems, 1943b: 1).

There was concern as to what would happen after the war when everybody anticipated an increased demand for housing staff which the Society's training could not cope with. The debate about the admission of men reflects this and foreshadows one of the Society's major problems after the war. It might seem no longer appropriate to continue as a separate body but, if men were admitted, would the women be swamped and lose out in the contest for employment? Society members were aware that gains made in wartime would not necessarily be continued in peacetime. Signs of many of the problems which were to face the Society after the war were apparent already.

## CHAPTER 6

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